Entertainment
Kristine to quit show biz, may leave Dingdong heartbroken

Business / B1
Peso hits 4-month high
P55.65 = $1

News / A2
SC strikes down Comelec quick count

News / A7
National Artist Jose Maceda dies at 87

Tanong ng Bayan / A22
Bawasan ang baloka! Teka, paano nga ba?

Padilla name missing on official Comelec list

By Cynthia D. Balana

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Chinoy upstart threatens to end Zamboanga dynasty

Friday, May 7, 2004 • 36 pages | vol. 19 | no. 149

Bro. Eddie rally draws 1M

Bangon Pilipinas bet claims 5M attended

By Lala B. Salaverria, Juliet Labog-Javellana, Christine O. Avendaño and Philip Edroza

PACKING 'em in: The true believers of Bro. Eddie Villanueva give their vows a "Mizing de Avance" in Tiong remember. They flocked to the Quirino Grandstand at the Rizal Park in numbers that overwhelmed the kick-off rally to launch his presidential candidacy last February.

Picasso sells for record $104 million

It's official: INC voting for GMA

By Ed Cabuenagar Jr., Juliet Labog-Javellana and Carlos Pablo

El Shaddai, too, is for Gloria

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Carlos Pablo

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE REVISITED

ELECTION 2004

Lacson: No intention of coming back with his body on his shield

By Rubor Alabastro
Desk Editor

A WARRIOR to the hilt... Sen. Panfilo Lacson faces the biggest battle of his life on May 10, and he says he has every intention of winning. By his side is his wife Mira.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Latest Weather Low, Scattered showers and thunderstorms mostly cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers

If it's 'Bong,' it's for Bong Revilla

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court yesterday upheld the Commission on Elections' decision that even a name like "Bong" would be construed to be worst of acknowledged nonconventional candidates (Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr.).

In a two-page resolution, the high court junked the petition of Abraham Ig Ong that accused candidate Olivia "Bong" Coo since she failed to prove that the Comelec committed a grave abuse of discretion when it allowed Revilla to amend his certificate of candidacy (COC).

Revilla had initially put "Bgy" as his nickname in his COC. The Comelec approved his request to change it to "Bong" on April 08.

Coo appealed the Comelec decision before the high court on Tuesday, claiming that the poll body and Revilla committed in defrauding her of the right to due process. She claimed that the Comelec approved Revilla's request without informing her of his petition.

Coo said this deprived her of her fundamental right to contest on Revilla's petition.

The Supreme Court disagreed.

It said that Coo had failed to bar COC that her nickname or stage name was "Bong Coo" while Revilla declared that his surname was "Bong Revilla," his first name Ramon Jr., and his nickname or stage name "Bgy."

"Undeniably, 'Bong Coo' is not the same as 'Bong,'" the SC said.

The tribunal added that the Comelec Law Department found out that Revilla had consistently used "Bong" as his nickname when he ran his very governor and governor of Cavite in the 1995, 1998 and 2001 elections.

It noted that Coo did not challenge this finding of the Comelec law department.

SC strikes down Comelec quick count

By Philip C. Tubeza

THE SUPREME Court yesterday stopped the Commission on Elections from conducting a quick count of the May 10 elections by ordering the poll body to "observe the status quo" before April 26 when the Comelec issued a resolution for it to conduct its own "very quick" count.

The high court issued the order while it deliberates on a petition of opposition lawyer Romeo Brillantes in asking the tribunal to stop the Comelec from installing a quick count to prevent "tweaking" and ensuing confusion in the polls.

The SC gave the Comelec until noon on Saturday to comment on Brillantes' petition.

But Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. did not wait for the Saturday deadline and immediately rushed to the SC at about 1 p.m. yesterday.

Abalos told reporters he was there to talk to Justice Hilario Davide Jr. "on whatever is around."

"It hurts. I cannot understand the Supreme Court," he said.

"We want to convince the justices to give us a chance ... They issued the order without hearing us side. We are an independent body with plenary authority," he added.

SC Clerk of Court Lourdes Perez said Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. had told the justices and court officials to be ready to hold a special session, possibly on Sunday, the eve of election.

The very quick count, mentioned to ease the government another P300 to P400 million, was the second major Comelec project to be stopped by the high court.

The SC on Jan. 13 voided the P1.3 billion contract to purchase automated counting machines from the Mega Pacific consortium.

Abalos said the status quo order should be lifted immediately as the Comelec needed to prepare for the quick count.

"The elections are on Monday. What do we do with our preparations? It's not that easy. What will happen to us?" he said.

Abalos bitterly stated that the high court did not issue a similar status quo order when the Comelec was still preparing its automated counting machines project.

The SC voided the project only after the ACMs were already delivered, he added.

How it works

Abalos and his assistants proceeded to the office of Justice Puno who took him to Davide's office.

After meeting with Davide for 20 minutes, Abalos told reporters the chief justice had promised to give the Comelec a chance to present how the quick count works. He thanked Davide for agreeing to meet with him.

He added the poll body would take 95 to count up with a comment on Brillantes' petition yesterday.

Abalos warned that the floodgates to widespread cheating would be opened if the poll body is prevented from conducting its own quick count.

He said it was meant to address the problem of fraudulent poll practices like dagdag-bawas, or vote-shaving and padding.

"But then, here we are again, open to all of these kinds of cheating. The switching of election returns will again be there. Though we have some security measures, the dagdag-bawas happens during the consolidation [of election returns]," he said.

In his petition, Brillantes said the April 28 Comelec resolution that allowed the poll body to conduct its own "very quick" count of election results should be voided to prevent widespread confusion after the voting.

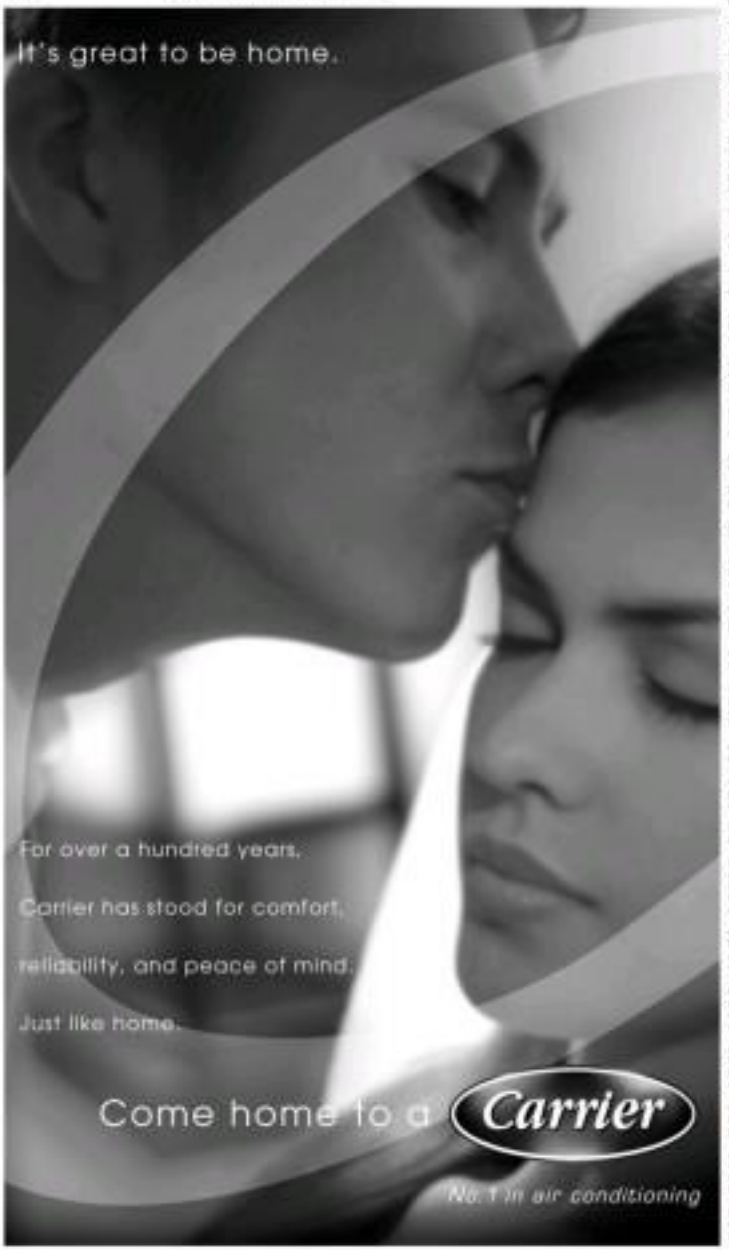
The poll body's quick count, dubbed the Very Quick Comelec III, is purported to be computerized and would be conducted through the electronic transmission of election returns from the 42 election precincts.

Brillantes argued that the Comelec's quick count would result in "flawless chaos" as the National Movement for Free Elections, the Comelec's citizen's arm, will be conducting its own Comelec-approved quick count.

"Electronic transmission of advanced election results will definitely cause crowding, much confusion and chaos, and baseless filing of election protest suits and countersuits," Brillantes said.

And when the poll body itself is the one creating the "unofficial" trend, "the confusion will definitely double, on the benefit of no one, save the one favored by the trending Comelec," Brillantes added.

He claimed that even when it was only hinting at conducting a quick count, authentic election returns in the Namfrel's quick count results did not tally with the Comelec's slow manual count.



Terror alert raised

THE COUNTRY has been placed on high alert for terror attacks around Monday's election after security forces arrested several suspected Muslim militants, seized explosives, and uncovered a cell linked to al-Qaida.

About 45 million voters will flock to schools and soon-hills across the country to elect more than 17,000 national, provincial and local officials.

Malacañang has marshalled thousands of police and army reinforcements into Manila and said yesterday that the anti-terror task force uncovered a cell of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) regional band linked to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network.

"The threats are real," Maj. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, military chief of operations, told Reuters.

A 40-year-old Muslim man arrested in Mindanao is believed to have received $25,000 from al-Qaida via JI operatives here, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters.

Bomb attacks

At the raid of March, security forces arrested six militants accused by President Macapagal-Arroyo of plotting major bomb attacks in Manila.

"It has been protecting local militants to produce results," an army intelligence officer told Reuters.

Army officials said the arrests had led to a wider piece of bombings in Mindanao.

They said the suspects admitted links to a senior JI figure, an Indonesian national named Usman al Ghazi, who has been conducting training in a rebel camp in the southern region since 1998.

Determined were the ruling body count in one of the country's most heated campaign seasons, the President has ordered the police and military to intensify the crackdown on private armed groups and loose firearms.

Election-related violence has soared more than 80 fatalities since the start of the campaign on Feb. 10.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said Ms Macapagal has upgraded to all-out readiness in election hot spots to exercise restraint and keep supporters in check, and cautioned ex-military and ex-police officers against playing partisan politics.

A group of 200 former generals led by Gen. Eduardo Ermita held a press conference on Wednesday, saying an alleged plot by the President's camp to manipulate the results of the May 10 elections.

Presidential campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor argued that Mr Macapagal had no reason to cheat because she was leading in the surveys. "We are not worried about losing," Defensor said.

The Philippine National Police confirmed yesterday that their top priority for Monday is security.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Asst Gobbar Rudy denied presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson's allegation that the police force's monitoring order is to facilitate cheating nationwide in favor of the President. Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Christian Esguerra, with a report from Reuters

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SOUNtex

Money trail leads to local terrorist cell

By Alcuin Papa

AUTHORITIES have uncovered the money trail from the al-Qaida international terror network through the regional Jemaah Islamiyah terror group and thence to local terrorists with the arrest of a moneychanger in Cotabato City on April 3.

Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita presented to media yesterday the papers identified as Jordan Hamza Abdullah, 46, a Shiite and currency trader based in Cotabato.

Ermita said Abdullah was the conduit of funds from al-Qaida in support of terrorist activities in the country.

Abdullah was arrested at the Shalom Cafe in Cotabato City by virtue of an arrest warrant issued by General Santos City Regional Trial Court Judge Antonio Lobrio for multiple frustrated murder.

Ermita said Abdullah provided authorities with "valuable information on the JI presence in the country, his association with suspected JI members and the currency transactions that put authorities on the trail of the al-Qaida money."

At the press conference in Camp Aguinaldo, Lt. Ramon Fajardo, chief of the antiterrorism Task Force Ituaburi, traced the money trail from al-Qaida to Abdullah.

In July 2003, he said, Abdullah received $20,000 from an Indonesian named Zulkifli, whom authorities claimed was the top JI man in the Philippines. Zulkifli in turn had received the money from another Indonesian, Hambali, otherwise known as Nurjaman Riduan Isamuddin. The alleged source of the funds was Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law and suspected mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States.

Both Hambali and Mohammed are in US custody at an undisclosed location. Zulkifli is under arrest in Malaysia.

The money was reportedly brought into the Philippines by an unidentified courier from Kuala Lumpur who handed it to Zulkifli personally in Cebu City. The funds were then brought to Cotabato City and given to Abdullah who converted the $25,000 to P1.3 million, giving half of it or P650,000 to Zulkifli.

Zulkifli in turn passed his share to a JI cell member identified only as Marwan, a bomb expert, to fund bombing operations in Mindanao.

The rest of the money was deposited to an Allied Bank account under the name Dodo Lucjadjo.

With P150,000, Abdullah bought a residence in Cotabato City which the PNP raided on Oct. 19, 2003. In the raid, police found improvised explosive devices, bomb-making components and materials for putting together bio-toxic weapons.

Abdullah was also instructed to give P60,000 to a certain Lily, whom Zulkifli wanted to marry, as a dowry.

The rest of the money—P350,000—formed the capital for Abdullah's foreign exchange operation, while P305,615 was deposited to a PNB account in Cotabato City. Ricardo said the money-changing operation became the funding source for the JI militia in Mindanao.

Hambali was the only non-Arab sitting in the al-Qaida leadership council until his arrest in August 2003. He was also JI's overall in-command and its operations chief and had planned numerous terrorist operations throughout Southeast Asia, including the Christmas church bombings in 2000 and the Bali blasts in 2002.

He began working with Mohammed in 1994 and helped funnel money to be first JI cell in the Philippines.

Mohammed was al-Qaida's military chief until his arrest in March 2003 in Pakistan. He was involved in nearly every major al-Qaida attack since 1993 and admitted being the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks in the US which were reportedly planned by his cell in the Philippines in 1995.

Ermita said legal moves are underway to freeze the bank accounts of Abdullah, including seeking the help of the Anti-Money Laundering Council in investigating the accounts.

Ricardo said they expect to discover more accounts opened by Abdullah.

Ricardo said the money was used to fund bombings in Penang, Maguindanao, Kidapawan, South Cotabato, Tacurong, Cotabato, and the during airport alert in Maguindanao.

Ermita stressed they had nothing to link Abdullah to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. But there was evidence, he said, to link Abdullah with the Abu Sayyaf group.

Gonzales warns of post-polls plot

By Alcuin Papa

NATIONAL Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales yesterday warned of an alleged plot by the opposition to discredit next week's elections through the use of "propaganda, sabotage and violence" in the event of a victory for President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May 10 elections.

Gonzales told a press conference that the plot involved a coordinated action plan involving civilians, retired and active military officers meant to replace the so-called Erap Team with "Biday Brigade."

The plan aims to paralyze the business sector and convince the majority of active military and police officers and the international community "to recognize the opposition candidate as the legitimate president," he said, with reports of massive cheating followed by massive harassment to be blamed on the administration, the walkouts of opposition poll watchers and calls for mass actions as fallout.

Gonzales said a series of bombings "of still undetected target areas" was in the plan and that losing opposition candidates would also band together and prepare a united front against the President's "unpopular leadership."

Rep. Patricia Bautista, spokesperson for the Pro campaign, brushed aside the allegations, saying "we have no capability to do that. The ones who are capable of doing that are those who are scared in the government."

He charged that the accusations were intended to malign the opposition and frighten the public into not voting for Poe.

Another spokesperson, Mike Herrera, rejected the allegations as "steadfast lie and unfair." With a long history of coups and military plotting, the country has been gripped by rumors and unsubstantiated allegations of unrest throughout the election campaign.

Gonzales explained that some of their sources for the alleged plot came from the ranks of the opposition who have shifted their loyalty to the administration.

Pressed by newsmen to name other groups supposedly involved in the plot, Gonzales said, "You just have to look at the groups of former Senator Francisco Tatad and Liberated Boy Morales." He added that Tatad had established a headquarters and was allegedly conducting secret meetings. Morales is chair of the Partido ng Maning Filipino that propelled former President Joseph Estrada to the presidency.

He added that retired generals were involved in the opposition plot. When pressed for names, Gonzales just said "some of them are already in the newspapers."

The other day a group of generals held a press conference and warned that the administration might resort to cheating to win the elections. They also warned they would switch to balloting in different parts of the country.

With reports from AFP, Reuters

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Pacquiao is trapped–Marquez

Pinoy challenger 7-5 pick over Mexican champ

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—Manny Pacquiao thrilled to swim strongly Wednesday; He easily beat the weigh scales, had a hearty lunch, then watched the San Antonio Spurs go up 2-0 in the NBA Western Conference semifinals.

Pacquiao, who has picked the Spurs over the Los Angeles Lakers, weighed 125 lb, one lighter than the featherweight limit, to clear training under scorching conditions in this gaming and entertainment capital.

Too glad as he was, Pacquiao will not like what Mexican foe chatted that the Filipino boxing celebrity would be stepping into ring when they clash for the world boxing featherweight kingship here Saturday night (Sunday morning in Manila).

It's a fight he has long dreamed of, said Marquez, who also aims to restore Mexican boxing pride after it was shattered by Pacquiao's emotional conquest of the popular Marco Antonio Barrera last November.

"After Barrera, they thought they had beaten the best guy and anybody will be scared," said Marquez as quoted by mexiconsg.com. "But fighting me is not the same as fighting Barrera. They're in for a rude awakening."

Pacquiao had told the Inquirer he expected Marquez to be an easier foe than Barrera.

This entailed he discounts a's description.

Marquez explained that, after Oscar Suarez framed "diametrically detailed" him for 22 months, while some of the top names would dare get into the ring with him," Pacquiao has gallantly provided what could be a stepping stone to gaining respect and full stardom.

"All Marquez has been dreaming of is one great fight, and this is it," the website said.

It was explained Barrera could never be used as a gauge because the humbled Mexican ring idol was too distracted and was only relieff of his old trafficker he fought Pacquiao.

Marquez, who climbed in Tuesday to join Pacquiao among the guests in the 5,000-room MGM Grand, one of the title bout, did not brag about any built in advantage.

After having talked about, he just smiled gra-

PACQUIAO AS

MARQUEZ (left) strikes a fighting pose with the cameramans' here, Pacquiao.

Asistio grabs 2-stroke lead in Aspac golf

JAKARTA, Indonesia—Romeo Asistio of the Philippines fired a one-under par 71 Wednesday to seize a two-stroke lead in boys' Class B after the rain-delayed second round of the 20th Asia-Pacific Junior Golf Championships.

The 14-year-old Asistio completed two trips over the soggy Tanah Indah Golf and Country Club course with a 144 aggregate, behind Tan Tzung Yeol Tatsuo and Elito Jr. He of Korea by two going into Thursday's final round.

Tan, who shared the lead with Asistio and Indian Raghuvir Wahi in the opening round, scored another 73 while Elito matched par 72. Tabio passed to be a one-day wonder as he collapsed with six 89 and fell to behind at 157.

Asistio figure submitted a respectable one-under 71 but still fell into a tie for fifth as Korean boy overcame to dominate.

With her 141 total, Spain starts the final round six shots behind sole leader Lee E Yee who added a 67 to her 68 for a 135.

Another Korean, Ha Ji Young, who is second spot at 139 is 4 shy with Taiwan's Tzung Yi Xie who Thursday the

ASISTIO: Tzung 89 spoofed

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Power consumers face universal levy under GMA, warns Enrile

POWER consumers should relax and switch off the regime of President Macapagal-Arroyo to stop all excessive electricity rates or face more punishment in over 63 years in the form of an universal levy slapped on all consumers for all over the country hours favored to lower than a one of their making.

That was the warning raised yesterday by Kaalyansa ng Singlokalaang Pilipinas senatorial candidate Juan Ponce Enrile that consumers all over the country would soon be forced to pay the universal charge of 46 centavos per kilowatt-hour provided for by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA).

The Epira, which was pushed by President Macapagal, has turned out to be an instrument to legally abuse and exploit all electricity consumers instead of alleviating their problems, Enrile said in a press statement.

Section 33 of the Epira allows distribution utilities like Meralco to pass on their stranded costs to electric consumers nationwide under a universal charge, Enrile said.

Enrile explained that a universal levy is a charge or cost that is applied to all consumers regardless of location, power supplier or distributor it is so incurable, back in time the electricity consumers that bear, Enrile said.

Stranded cost is the difference between the true market price of power and the price that a power distributor like Meralco would bill consumers from supply contracts it had signed up with its power companies.

Enrile said that at present, the universal levy or charge is cleverly hidden and paid for by consumers in their monthly bills as GRAM (Generation Rate Adjustment Mechanism) and Other Charges by Long Run Average Cost), which both partly replaced the unpopular PPA.

Monday's a holiday

MALACAÑANG has declared May 15, Election Day, as a special non-working holiday nationwide.

In a statement, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo said he signed Proclamation No. 658 to give the people the fullest opportunity to participate in the national and local elections.

There are 43 million registered voters in the country.

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Maceda, nat'l artist for music, dies; 87

MANDAUE, Cebu for Music Jose M. Maceda died last Wednesday at his residence at the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman, Quezon City. He was 87 years old.

The eminent composer, musicologist, pianist and teacher succumbed to acute respiratory failure after an ailment.

Proclaimed National Artist for Music in 1997, Maceda was cited for his contributions to the promotion of a distinctly Filipino cultural identity through his scholarly studies on the music and cultures of the country's indigenous peoples. His works were characterized by a fusion of avant-garde techniques and an Asian philosophical approach to time and music.

The National Artist Award said his representations "liberated Filipino musical expression from a strictly Eurocentric mold. He is recognized for his unique documentation and musical literatures of a national ethos that celebrates Filipino, as well as Asian, world views."

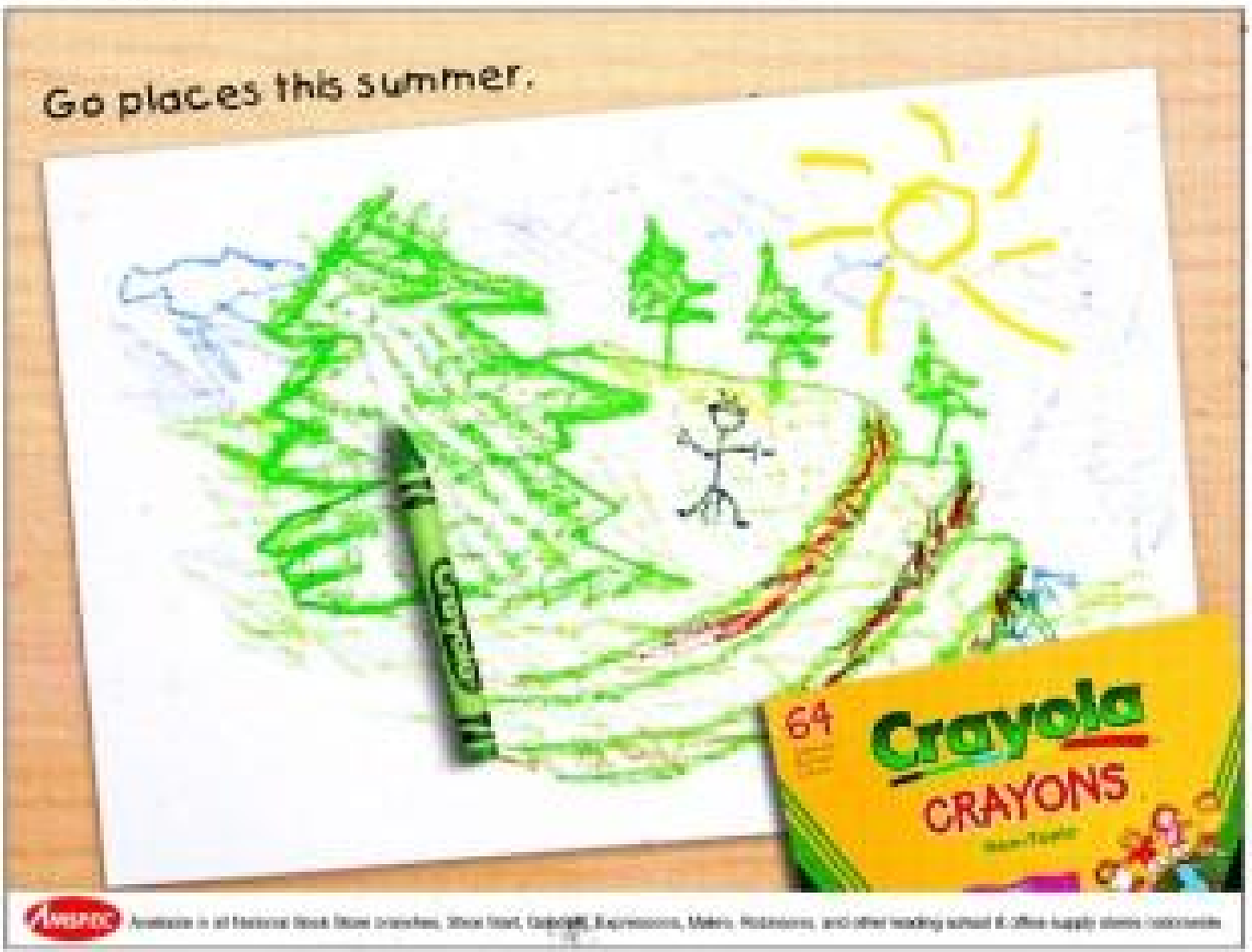
Maceda is also credited for his contributions to ethnomusicology. Because of his efforts, the study of Philippine instruments has become a part of the curriculum of music schools in the country.

Born on July 11, 1917, Maceda earned a music diploma at the Academy of Music in Manila in 1935 before going on to study piano with Alfred Cortot in Paris in 1937. He returned to the Philippines and began a notable career as a concert pianist.

After further studies in anthropology and ethnomusicology and earning his Ph.D., Maceda shifted from performance to composition, fieldwork and research.

Maceda's extensive archive is sought to be the UP College of Music in Diliman. Some musicologists also want it to be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. More Theater news soon.

Maceda is survived by his four daughters, Rhoda Yñiguez, Madeleine Maceda, Kathleen Maceda and Rhona Magsil. He was married to the late pianist Madelyn Gil Ford.



Pacquiao is trapped–Marquez; Filipino 7-5 pick

(From page A1)

mostly and minimal greetings when Filipino media mass barraged into his group at the hotel lobby Wednesday afternoon.

The Sanchez-Morones double-world champ appeared aware like a harmless shuttlecock in his seat, blank stared/stuck-gel up.

Marquez handlers said their boxer, promoted to 126 having weight troubles by Pacquiao's manager, also weighed-early 125.8 after his final training Wednesday.

"No problem. If we don't think we can win, there's no use climbing the ring," explained Marquez trainer Nacho Beristain through team physician Miguel Ortiz.

The Mexican group did admit Pacquiao is good but "not evolved more head for this one." Beristain said Marquez tended 80 rounds of sparring against six different fighters who tried to emulate Pacquiao's southpaw stance.

Pacquiao totaled 126 rounds against several seasoned sparmates, including welterweights, some of whom had refused to enter bank after suffering severe punishment.

Pacquiao, who tied a piston of Marquez at the hotel lobby, left Tuesday night, will be on the same stage with Erik during the championship press conference Thursday.

The official weigh-in is on Friday.

The championship media junket formally opened Wednesday and lasted out fact sheets showing Pacquiao and Marquez quite even in many departments, both fighters have racked up 11 successive wins, mostly by knockout, since they suffered their last loss in 1999.

After Marquez clinched it, fight odds in the lousy gambling capital settled at 7-5 in favor of Pacquiao. Bilkis said that a $176 bet on Pacquiao will pay $100; whereas a $100 wager on Marquez will net $150.

"No problem, it's just too hot," said trainer Freddie Roach of the early dip in Pacquiao's side.

fight percentage.

There's no reason to suspect a bruised Marquez has always been in control, Roach said.

Marquez will not sing holy hymns

BARE EYE

Rhondi Trinidad

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—Manny Pacquiao, smiling a lemon, ready-to-bite smile in the big banned posters around the many lobbies of the MGM Grand, looks exactly like Manny Pacquiao.

It's a perfect pose to sell the main event, which promoters believe will be a featherlight night out at the Grand Arena of the Grand hotel.

Naturally, there's also the picture of Juan Manuel Marquez aiming to throw a killer punch opponent Pacquiao to complete the colorful championship advertisement.

Well, to repeat, Pacquiao in person looks exactly like same Pacquiao in the picture.

He's muscular, tough and, yes, lovely.

Which is just fine because Pacquiao, a former coal construction worker, had been through a lot of hardships before making it all the way to this city of stars.

***

Pacquiao, the poor boy from Gensan (as seen ranked only by side with the likes of Tom Jones, Paul Anka, Madonna, Rod Stewart), is seen and applauded among the big stars at MGM Grand.

Bob, Marquez, a former accountant, should also be seen as a star, although not as big and striking as the ruby-haired Filipino boxing hero.

After a nine hour bus, round-and-the Pacquiao, Marquez in person is not a distant cousin of Marquez in the big pictures on the hotel lobby.

OK. Marquez is the featured boxing ads is also tough, if sparely muscular.

He also struck the cleverest: he'd do battle, slash out at the sound of the bell.

The odd thing is that Marquez in person doesn't resemble the fighter in the picture.

***

He looks very much like a tennis pro who'd date sports-editor Lito Tarupan-screw.

He appears sweet and mostly amused Manny Pacquiao fooling spectator Nick Gonipac.

Both media stars, who share a room with this reporter at MGM Grand, were also of the impression Marquez could not hurt a fly.

I should-definitely-not.

Pic nearly missed, the holder of the WBA and IBF featherweight belts taken out public around Wednesday on the main hotel lobby.

I thought the nice-looking guy in a tight, black jacket and jogging pants was a swaying coder, a footloose Forbesian.

He could have also passed for a fast-dashing diner for the branded, hasty-taste-addictions.

***

Then a not to underestimate the Mexican fan-like world-champ, but he also appeared faster if not totally harmless.

That seems to be said because of the many friends who kept wondering if they should place a bet on Pacquiao.

Look, if this were cockfighting, Marquez, based on his appearance in person, should be a double-your-money underdog.

But, really, will it be wise to wager against Marquez, also known as Dreamlite built in Mexico City?

***

Listen, please.

I had had the chance to feel here truly tough Pacquiao is.

At least a couple of times, he had dared me to dig my fist into his chest (last Feb).

I had also felt the might and mercury burning in the core when I felt his neck and shoulders.

He struck me as somebody carved out of a rock, to quote Ernest Hemingway.

In short, compared to Pacquiao, Marquez is built small and soft.

But will I dare put my brandy money on Marquez on Saturday here?

***

Sorry, folks. But, despite the prevailing physical-edge, I can't count Pacquiao to down in-to-underdog Marquez on flight night.

Why? Because Pacquiao has already been making full meals in the run-up to the Friday weigh-in.

Not Marquez.

A longtime featherweight, he visibly has had to shirk in a strict, cruel diet to keep his weight in check.

He's not used [illegible] through with the weigh in.

Marquez will instantly blossom and be transformed overnight into a full lightweight, or even bolder.

The smaller, softer fellow will be tougher, bigger at fight time.

Pacquiao needs this thing will be exactly the same Marquez in the morning-picture.

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The WORLD

Cesar Lorenzo B. Garcia

Baghdad car bomb blast kills 6; Bush condemns US prisoner abuses

BAGHDAD—A suicide bomber killed five Iraqis and an American soldier at an entrance to the US-baghdad headquarters on Thursday, hours after President George W. Bush tried to mend the damage from a prisoner abuse scandal.

The car bomb, which blew one victim's leg 200 meters, also wounded 23 Iraqi civilians and at least three US soldiers at an entry checkpoint to the so-called Green Zone, a US military spokesperson said.

The bomber struck as Iraqis employed by the US-led administration were going to work in the heavily guarded zone which used to be Saddam Hussein's Republican Palace.

"There was a large explosion. There was a huge cloud of dust and everything went black around me," said survivor Shihab Ahmed.

"I saw dead people in the cars around me," he added as he finally struggled out of his damaged car. "Every time we queue in this line, we expect something to happen."

US Col. John Mowry said at the scene the three wounded American soldiers were "very seriously" hurt.

Seven earlier, Bush appeared on two Arabic satellite television stations to tell an enraged Middle East that soldiers guilty of abusing Iraqi prisoners would be punished.

"To a democracy everything is not perfect. Mistakes are made. But in a democracy as well those mistakes will be investigated and people will be brought to justice," he told the US-funded Alhurra channel.

"Our citizens in America are appalled by what they saw, just like people in the Middle East are appalled," he told Dubai-based Al-Arabiya. Bush called the abuses "abhorrent."

He did not explicitly apologize for the scandal which erupted after pictures of prisoners being sexually humiliated appeared last week, leaving the public apologies to top aides.

A week after pictures were published of grinning US soldiers abusing naked Iraqis at Abu Ghraib prison, Iraq's largest prison and notorious under Saddam Hussein, the US army revealed that 23 prisoners had died in Iraq and Afghanistan in US custody.

They included two Iraqi men murdered by Americans, one death described as justifiable homicide, and 12 dead in by natural or undetermined causes. Six were still being investigated.

The CIA said it was investigating the deaths of three prisoners interrogated by its personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan but did not say if those were among the 23 reported by the army.

At abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad, where nearly 4,000 Iraqis are held, hundreds demonstrated outside the heavily guarded walls demanding the release of relatives on Wednesday.

Some wanted vengeance.

At a Baghdad coffee shop, where men gathered to watch Arab satellite television, Abdul-Sattar Abdul-Sahim said he doubted any US investigation into the abuse would change conditions in Iraq. Reuters

IRAQ'S slightest attempt to extinguish burning vehicles following a suicide bombing near a checkpoint to the route complex housing US administration officials in central Baghdad, Iraq, May 6. AFP

200 Nigeria Muslims die in Christian attack

KANO, Nigeria—More than 200 Muslims are dead and 120 injured after Christian militia marched a central Nigerian town, one of Nigeria's most senior Islamic leaders said Wednesday, branding the assault "mass murder."

Abdullahi Ado, secretary general of Nigeria's main Muslim representative body the Jama'atu Nasril Islam, warned that if the violence was not halted it could trigger similar attacks in southern Christian elsewhere.

"Between 200 and 250 people were killed in the violence, while many more have disappeared," he said in a telephone interview.

State governors from Nigeria's Muslim-dominated northern region Tuesday began an emergency meeting over the crisis, state-run Radio Nigeria Kaduna reported.

The police could not be reached for comment.[illegible] scripts that the scene of the violence which began late Tuesday.

The radio, monitored here, did not give further details on the governors' talks.

"Those who disappeared cannot be accounted for, nobody knows if they are dead or in hiding. 120 people, including women and children, are missing," Ado said, citing who gave fleeing the flashpoint region.

"There are difficulties to getting exact figures because the situation is still tense, and it will take time to account for the exact number of dead and missing. It's mass murder, because machine guns were used, not machetes."

Late on Tuesday, heavily armed militants from the Christian Tarok ethnic group stormed Jos, a farming community in the Christian local government area of central Nigeria's Plateau State, 300 km east of Abuja. AFP

Georgia's 2nd bloodless revolt: Rebel leader flees

BATUMI, Georgia—The leader of Georgia's renegade Adjar region resigned and flew out of his Black Sea province bound for exile in Moscow early Thursday in the second bloodless revolution to sweep the former Soviet republic in six months.

It had been feared that the scandal-ridden Adjaran's leader Aslan Abashidze and the Georgian government would trigger a civil war, but in the end he left quietly and ordered his paramilitaries to lay down their arms.

"Now this can end, Adjara is free," said a beaming Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in the capital, Tbilisi, in a live television address. "A new era has begun in Georgia's history."

Abashidze, a white-haired former Communist official who had run Adjara for more than a decade, was the last bastion of the old regime of ex-president Eduard Shevardnadze which had been swept away in last year's "rose revolution."

Immediately his departure was announced, a senior[illegible] and anti-Abashidze protesters who had been hanging a rope in Adjara's capital, Batumi, for the past two days, started celebrating deliriously.

In scenes which echoed last year's revolution in the capital Tbilisi, the demonstrators brandished flags and chanted "Misha!, Misha!"—the affectionate nickname for the Georgian president.

"We knew this would happen sooner or later but now that it has we can hardly believe it," said one demonstrator, who gave his name as Giorgi.

Some of the crowd poured into Abashidze's residence and emerged carrying trophies including drinking glasses and documents from their former leader's office.

Abashidze's unlikely hated security forces, who had helped him stay in power by suppressing dissent, began filing into their barracks to hand in their weapons.

"Everyone is giving in their guns," said Gedia, a member of Abashidze's elite guard unit. "It was his last instruction before he left."

Meanwhile, Saakashvili ordered his security forces to fill the vacuum left by the collapse of Abashidze's rule and to prevent looting and violence while order was re-established.

His officials said he himself would be arriving in Adjara later Thursday "to congratulate the Adjaran people."

After days clashing which Abashidze said he would not be forced out in the face of growing pressure, Monday[illegible]

Following three hours of talks between the Adjaran leader and Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania in his office, Abashidze left the building in a black limousine and drove at top speed to Batumi's airport.

Accompanied by Igor Ivanov, Russia's Security Council Secretary who had flown in to oversee[illegible] machine, Abashidze boarded a waiting jet without saying a word and took off to Moscow.

He left behind him on the tarmac about 150 of his bodyguards, some of whom wept as they bid farewell to their boss. AFP

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Finally, a good Asian 9-ball draw for Django

By Ray Learia

TAIPEI—Efren "Bata" Reyes believes billion Filipino pool legend Francisco "Django" Bustamante stands a good chance of making his fourth leg of the Asian Mikgual Asian 9-ball four here.

Bustamante stands a good chance of making his fourth leg of the Asian Mikgual Asian 9-ball four here.

Bustamante, currently the world's top-ranked player who hasn't gone past the quarterfinals in the country-hopping tour, is predicted to breeze past Singaporean Tan Thiang Beam in today's round 1 at the Leader Creative Center.

Also favored with Bustamante were Thai Chanchawat Satphan and Indonesia Hamlin and Taiwanese Chen Huang-wu, Wang Hung-kuang, Wu Chia-ching and Hung Le-hsing. "Django should be able to explain going and hood into the semifinals," said Reyes. "This tournament is a good break for him."

The 40-year-old Bustamante, who topped the Japan Open in January but in window since then, said his shots and control breaks are OK but the balls won't simply fall.

"I just need to string some good hits and my break would be back," said Bustamante.

Meanwhile, Reyes said he needs to play well to be in title contention again.

Paired with fellow Mist in the opener, Reyes, winner of the Singapore and Hu Chi Hsin legs before settling for a fourth place finish in the Hong Kong stop, expects trouble against strike Abdul Rizman of India or compatriot Lee Wen Cortina.

Also in Bata's group were Rumul's Sack Wen Yeong and Thailand's Tepwin Amornath and Hong Kong's Fung Hsuh Wai and Taiwan's Hsia Hsi-Kai.

Honeycutt triple cuts down SMB

By Jane Navarro

JERALD Honeycutt drained a triple with 2.6 ticks left to carry Talk 'N Text to a thrilling 89-87 victory over San Miguel Beer last night in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Quezon Convention Center in Lucena City.

Honeycutt received a nifty pass from playmaker Jimmy Mapiig and turned it into the game-clinching three pointer, downing the Phone Pals to their eighth win in 14 outings.

Junthon Hontiveros had an eye on the basket in the final play but he was smothered by the defensive blanket thrown by the Phone Pals to take his shot.

Their winning run stopped at four games, the Beermen still paced the conference with a 12-2 record overall. Coach Jong Uichico and his wards have four more games to wrap up their eliminations campaign.

Honeycutt scored a team-high 20 points. Bal Siahaan added 19 while Willie Miller and Victor Pablo had 16 and 15 each for the Phone Pals, who breathed back from a stinging defeat at the hands of the Alaska Aces last week.

Coming off a week-long break, the Phone Pals got off to a sizzling start, getting steals shooting from Honeycutt and Pablo that had them leading by as many as 11 points, 20-9.

The Beermen rattled off a series of fastbreak plays and a couple of jumpers, cutting the lead to 22-20 with some four minutes remaining before the Phone Pals surged to a 34-24 spread again entering the second quarter.

Just as the Phone Pals threatened to break the game wide open, the Beermen again struck with a rally of their own, outscoring their opponents 13-7, midway into the second period.

Willie Miller's two free throws and a triple by Sunny De Ocampo restored order for the Phone Pals, who entered a 46-40 lead at halftime.

At the height of the Phone Pals' assault, Siahaan was slapped a technical for incessantly protesting against the referee's call.

Asi Taulava posted 18 points, 12 rebounds and 5 assists for Talk 'N Text, while Kerby Raymundo added 16 and Dondon Hontiveros 12.

The scores:

TALK 'N TEXT (89)—Taulava 18, Tenorio 14, Miller 16, Pablo 15, Reyes 4, Asaytig 2, De Ocampo 6, Yeo 2.

SAN MIGUEL (87)—Long 10, Hontiveros 14, Siahaan 12, Mapiig 7, Jimenez 6, Fonacier 6, Nikolic 2, Honeycutt 20.

Quarters: 20-20, 40-40, 67-67, 89-87

JAM Alkad of Nike Star gives Larry Fonacier (left) and JC Intal of Los Pipas Angeles no chance for a steal.

Hapee halts skid, downs Toyota Otis

By Piero Antiporda/Reyes

QUEZON—Orsua provided the spark that sent defending champion Hapee Toothpaste off and running to a 62-56 triumph over Toyota Otis-Letran yesterday in the 30th 2nd Unity Cup at the Mahan Coliseum.

Orsua fired six of his game-high 16 points in the first period without the North Spartans readily surprised their still against the rookie team to snap out of their three-game losing streak.

Hapee improved to 4-4 to strengthen its semifinal bid even as Toyota bowed to 3-5.

Otis Asia Cuenta escaped with a layup in the final 1.6 seconds as Blu Star Delos gets stopped Los Pipas Angeles, 65-64, in the second game.

The scores:

First Game: HAPEE (62)—Orsua 16, Dalisay 8, Mendoza 8, Lontoc 7, Gerpacio 7, Manuel 5, De la Merced 5, Mendoza 1, Ilao 1, Bagay 0, Estrella 0

TOYOTA-LETRAN (56)—Cuenta 15, Asia 13, Arabia 7, Dalisay, Bautista 6, Abalo 4, Pelaya 4, Santos 2, Valenzuela 0, Ilagan 0, Arabia 0

Quarters: 17-7, 30-19, 45-32, 62-56.

Second Game: BLU STAR (65)—Villamor 19, Dela Cruz 16, Alfaro 10, Cayabyab 8, Pascual 6, Mendoza 5, Asuncion 2, Gutierrez 2, Lacsamana 2, Aguirre 0, Alfaro 0

LOS PIPAS (64)—Salonga 14, Bello 14, Velasco 12, Intal 6, Nadurata, Ramos 2, Rosario 2, Zuniga 2, Arcenas 1, Del Rosario 0, Bautista 0, Dominguez

Gymnast Ramirez captures 6 golds

UNIVERSITY of the East's Al Ramirez, a two-time Southeast Asian Games veteran, produced six gold medals in the recent Inter-Territorial Gymnastics tournament in Singapore.

The 116 pound-Ramirez led the six-man RP delegation to the team championship, winning the gold medals in the floor exercises, horse vault, pommel horse, parallel bars and individual all-around in the process.

Frederick Reyes also did his share, bagging three silver medals in the floor exercise, horse vault and in the individual all-around, while Boris Bautista, a mainstay of the national pool, brought home two silvers in the pommel horse and parallel bars.

Manuel Abad topped the Filipinos' lofty haul with a bronze in the individual all-around event.

The rest other Filipino rookies—Kito Lombardo and Cecilio Cabanosa Jr.—failed to land a medal but helped score the Philippines to the team championship.

The Filipino gymnasts, who are all from UE, were accompanied by Santiago Ty, their head coach since 1985.

Jawo & Pia

SPECTATOR

Al V. Mendoza

I HAVE shaken the hand of Jawo. But Pia? Not yet.

Jawo, of course, is Rodney Jawarski, the living legend of basketball. And Pia is Pia Cayetano, daughter of the late Sen. Rene "Compañero" Cayetano.

Both are running for senator on May 10.

I wish they'd win as Jiggy Jawo would continue his scoring performances in the Senate while Pia could push the pro-sport bill by her father and likewise introduce her own programs that are, so far as I know, basically pro-people.

Pia's father was president of the nation's junior golf development program and, during his term, he had introduced measures to modify with the National Golf Association of the Philippines (NGAP). You may not know this but Sene "Compañero" Cayetano was instrumental in the development of Antonio Lascuña, now the current ranked No. 1 Filipino golf star who has had breakthrough win in the US LPGA last weekend.

Pia, whose brother Ren-Ren Pre-lawmaker for years as a true gentleman on and off the golf course, has been strongly backing for cause-oriented programs and, only recently, has waged the unrelenting successful "Bike-For-A-Cause" event going to Baguio. A lawyer just like her father Rene, Pia will surely also make a good lawmaker since she indeed is the Senate. I was, still is, a biker myself and Pia's "Bike-For-A-Cause" was a pitch for responsible biking in this country to the need of people who value health-oriented projects.

As for Jawo, well, hopefully he has enough in the Senate, he did not only look after the welfare of the Filipino athlete but also distinguished himself as a genuine environmentalist and pro-poor. He authored bills providing for financial incentives and housing projects to athletes who made good in overseas campaigns. He secured funds for the hoopfest, mainly in the Visayas and Mindanao, and provided housing for the homeless in many parts of the archipelago. And, yes, he was a major cog in the creation of the Cebu Sports Center, now pointed for clean air and pollution-free surroundings. Plus, of course, Jawo's bill that ensured possible waiver for almost every household in many parts of the country, not to mention the customs-free donation for basketball protection and related sports equipment.

I have shaken hands with Jawo but not Pia, whom I have yet to meet in person. But you need not ever meet someone to know if his/her character is good or not. Sometimes, the image will do. And Pia, with Cayetano for a father, has that.

Still, Jawo, you have a three-point shot all the time. Period!

DAYTRIUMF. My applause to Isidro Cortes and Ned Peralta for managing overall champions in the 6th Riviera Invitationals on April 25. Team Pigeons and Jing Lapus were gross champions, Rick Mendarosa and Lucy Lotilla-Inciong were doubles champions, Cynthia Antonio and Bernadette Moreno Ledesma champions and the tandems Sir Ten-Edmund Capistrano-Division 8 champion, Sir Lena-Rolando Bautista 9 champion and Teddy Dacuel-August Cruz C champion. The awarding ceremonies was a smash hit, what with the sexy Lady Dancers and promising Elvis Show hosting it. There's a plan once again to Commodore Danny Pizarro, Riviera president, for a well-organized tournament that delighted no end some 440 players.

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

It's a bo-bum campaign in far-flung Batanes

By Julier Catalama
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BASCO, Batanes—Election campaigns in Batanes through the years are almost conducted in a most civilized way and this year's election is no different.

Almost All Female (Batanes's nickname) mayoralty election campaign, which some believe are games that only intelligent people can play.

During campaign rallies, candidates bring out political issues almost repetitively so that most voters prefer to stay home and watch newscasts on television.

In previous elections, the electoral campaigns of some rival politicians in the province involved mudslinging and character assassination.

This year, however, the campaign is subdued as Ivatan politicians and their supporters learned to respect each other's political convictions.

In fact, some rival candidates go to villages together for campaigns.

As in previous years, Evelyn Abad, Commission on Elections supervisor in the province, said they are expecting the province to submit the results ahead of other provinces because Batanes has only 8,779 registered voters.

The most clearly watched contest here is between Incumbent Abad and former Gov. Telesforo Castillejos for the province's lone congressional district seat.

Abad, wife of outgoing Batanes Rep. Florencio "Bunch" Abad, is running under the Liberal Party-Lakas-CMD-NPC coalition, while Castillejos is allied with the opposition's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Jun Nicanor Gato is running for reelection against Greg Cayaon, a former official of the Philippine and Materials Authority of the Department of Agriculture.

Local political observers said the fight between Abad, who vowed to continue the projects of her husband, and Castillejos seems to polarize Batanes.

Castillejos has assailed Abad, a native of Lahuy, Mahatao, for not being a "homegrown" Ivatan.

Abad, however, said Castillejos' supervisor in the province, said they are expecting the province to submit the results ahead of other provinces because Batanes has only 8,779 registered voters.

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Ballot boxes in ice plant raise suspicions of fraud

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—The ballot boxes that were reported missing in Candaroan, Aurora, were found inside an ice plant there on Wednesday, reports gathered by the Inquirer showed.

Mayor Jeremias Esteves, reached by phone on Thursday, said the 17 ballot boxes, not 16 as the police had reported, were not illegally transferred to commit electoral fraud.

The mayor, he said, came from candidates of the administration party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats in Aurora.

Esteves, a candidate running for reelection under the Lakas ng Demokratikong Pilipino, said the Commission on Elections, the municipal treasurer and representatives of the LDP and Lakas-CMD on April 26 approved a resolution allowing the ballot boxes to be taken to the ice plant for cleaning. He said they also agreed to burn the used ballots inside the boxes.

"They all agreed to bring the ballot boxes to the ice plant. The municipal government owns (the ice plant) and it is also near the river. The boxes had to be cleaned because they were filled with mud after last year's floods," the mayor told the Inquirer.

"Wala kaming intensyon na nandaya (We have no intention to cheat)," Esteves said.

He said the ballot boxes were intended for the 31 precincts in Candaroan, some 120 km north of Baler, the capital town. Candaroan, which has 11,389 registered voters, uses 67 ballot boxes, he said.

Retired Aurora Gov. Edgardo Angara, who is running for governor against Lakas-CMD, said his supporters asked the police to look for the supposedly missing ballot boxes.

Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director, and municipal treasurer Hermogenes Bijasen admitted that he ordered the ballot boxes cleaned at the Candaroan River since April 26.

Three were reportedly kept at the ice plant for drying, Querol said, quoting the radio messages received from former brgy. Maasin Candaroan, the town police chief.

Querol said Mijares is being investigated for the act, which was not known to Comelec Aurora election supervisor Bernardo Ingalon.

Mijares, according to Querol, had insisted that it was the treasurer who had custody over the ballot boxes. These were reportedly empty when the police found them at the plant.

"Categorico is your point right away," Querol said, insisting that the police would not intervene or participate in any electoral fraud. Jhoedie Ocejan, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Cops say Boracay slay victims attacked during sleep

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Panay Bureau

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—The three foreigners and a Filipino found dead on this island were most likely attacked while they were sleeping before their killers took off with at least 20 personal items including cash, mobile phones and a digital camera.

This was the result of the initial police investigation released by Chief Supt. George Allan, police director for Western Visayas in a news conference yesterday with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Allan said they were basing my evidence against the nine construction workers in their custody before Ilang-Ilang in Aroth.

The President and here yesterday morning to check on the investigation of the case and to assure the safety of tourists.

"This is an isolated case which, the President said, is 'no reason for tourists not to come to Boracay.'"

Ms Macapagal met with Aklan Gov. Florencio Miraflores and Aklan Rep. Gabriel Calixto.

After the 45-minute meeting at the Kalabog Barangay Hall, the President said she ordered the police to expedite the resolution of the "gruesome crime."

She, however, admitted that she was satisfied with the performance of the police in the investigation.

German Aaron Sauerbrunner, 40 was found dead inside his room on the second floor of his three-story mansion called Dolce Vita, which sits on top of Mt. Luho in Sitio Balabag, Barangay Balabag.

Also found dead were his guests Heike Manfred Schaetz, Britain John Cowper Powell and Filipino maid Irene Sumalinog. The victims have been multiple stabbed wounds.

Police said their investigators showed that the victims were probably attacked while they were sleeping between 10:00 p.m. Saturday when Sumalinog last talked to a family member over the phone, said Sunday morning.

Brainbusters are still in his sleeping clothes when he was found dead.

Sumalinog was killed few weeks a friend knife because she opening of her wounds were smaller compared to that of the other victims, said Miss.

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Party-list groups to sue Gonzales for slays, attacks

MACATI CITY—The Bayan Muna party-list group and four other left-leaning groups will file charges against National Security Adviser Roilberto Gonzales before the Commission on Election, this time for the impact of his "red-baiting tag" on their campaign, a Bayan Muna nominee said.

Beverly Longid, also lead convenor of the Cordillera Human Rights Organization, said they believe Gonzales is an accessory to the recent murders of Bayan Muna members, which received after Gonzales accused the group of helping communist rebels.

She said Gonzales' statements linking Bayan Muna, Gabriela, Migrante, Anakpawis, Anak ng Bayan and Suara Bangsamoro to the New People's Army triggered the attacks on Bayan Muna members. Ilke Contreras Bagalso Perez (3rd Caraga as earlier reported) of Baybay, Davao.

Perez, a Bayan Muna campaigner, and his wife, Cristina, were ambushed on April 30 after they left a campaign rally of the group's gubernatorial mayor. Perez was killed while Cristina was wounded.

But Longid said Bayan Muna would need to build a fighter case if Gonzales' bid to file the murders because their witnesses must establish a grave, more connection to the murders.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo earlier cited Gonzales for libel due to his statements that accused Bayan Muna of using to push hated funds to benefit the NPA.

On Wednesday, Ocampo complained to Gonzales that the military was behind the harassment which Bayan Muna and the five party-list groups had suffered in the course of their campaign.

Longid said they had already documents and affidavits from Degay that recent soldiers of stopping Bayan Muna members from posting campaign materials in designated campaign areas in March. She said they had also documented cases where soldiers destroyed Bayan Muna materials.

Lt. Col. Perme Idanza, spokesperson of the AFP North-ern Luzon Command, said Lt. Gen. Romeo Dominguez, Balcom chief, did not order these soldiers to stop the activities of Bayan Muna.

Dominguez, according to Idanza, had reiterated the military's impartiality in this year's elections.

Longid said Bayan Muna members, on May 20, would perform election-monitoring duties in Isabela for their city proclaim. Vincent Cabreza

with a report from Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

HOOK UP
A security personnel of the Sanggunian Panglungsod in Davao City passes by a row of satellite dishes that were to be used to transmit results of the May 10 elections until the Supreme Court stopped it.

Central Luzon towns declared poll hot spots

By Tonyo Cruz
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CAMP OLIVAS, Pampanga—Angeles and Malolos in Bulacan and Hagonoy in Davao have been identified as election areas of immediate concern to General Lucas, the police said here on Tuesday.

The five towns qualified as hot spots as 30 percent of their electorate are affected by the presence of communist rebels.

There areas have a history of long-running feuds or internal political rivalry aided by partisan armed groups, and previous election-related violence had occurred there.

Nothing said Bulacan were only recently listed. These happened after tension broke out there on Monday when the supporters of political candidates staged protests against the implementation of a court-ordered suspension of incumbent officials, according to Chief Supt. Vidal Querol, Central Luzon police director.

At least 11 out of Central Luzon's 1,368 towns and cities where political rivalries thrive and 17 others where two communist armed groups operate will continue to be under strict watch on election day, May 10, to avert violence, Querol said.

Tension up between bets for governor

MANILA CITY—The rising tension between Gov. Widali Mitra and his rival, Jim Clemente Salilig, would be worst out of hand soon on Wednesday.

Akbar and Salilig had nearly broke out between his camp and that of his rival when Salilig's followers harassed him and his wife, Cherry.

He said they were on their way home from Barangay Salap Ilaya around 9 p.m. when he decided to drop by Quezon Boulevard upon seeing "many people."

"I decided to approach them," Akbar said.

He said at this moment, at least seven bodyguards of Salilig's came from nowhere and started poking their firearms at his safety.

"When I alighted from my vehicle, the seven armed men are already on trigger-ready position. My wife Cherry went on panic, became hysterical, and now she is still traumatized by the incident," Akbar said.

He said the bodyguards also created disarray.

Akbar said he presented blood blood by telling his escort to "cool down."

Salilman said the people Akbar was telling about were the ones exposed to the political rally he was then holding on Quezon Boulevard.

"He was the one who initiated the action, it was harassment against us. He already knew that we were having our rally on that road," Salilman said. *Julie T. Mojado, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Social Weather Station

May 29 - June 14, 2003
DE CASTRO ——— 25%
LEGARDA ——— 10%

Aug. 30 - Sept 14, 2003
DE CASTRO ——— 30%
LEGARDA ——— 19%

Nov 8 - 24, 2003
DE CASTRO ——— 29%
LEGARDA ——— 23%

Jan 16 - 22, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 32%
LEGARDA ——— 32%

Jan 29 - Feb 8, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 30%
LEGARDA ——— 29%

March 11 - 18, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 30%
LEGARDA ——— 28%

March 21 - 25, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 30%
LEGARDA ——— 34%

April 16 - 22, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 42.8%
LEGARDA ——— 29.8%

Pulse Asia

July 25 - Aug 5, 2003
DE CASTRO ——— 28%
LEGARDA ——— 19%

Nov 6 - 17, 2003
DE CASTRO ——— 33%
LEGARDA ——— 22%

Jan 23 - Feb 8, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 52%
LEGARDA ——— 31.5%

Feb 19 - 26, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 52%
LEGARDA ——— 31.8%

March 21 - April 4, 2004
DE CASTRO ——— 49%
LEGARDA ——— 33%

Malinaw ang pulso ng bayan sa mga resulta ng credible surveys. Laging nangunguna ang aming vice presidential bet na si KABAYAN NOLI

Madame President, muta umpisa hanggang sa pagtapos ng kampanya ay nanatiling buo at matatag ang K4 na haharap sa hatol ng bayan sa Lunes.

KABAYAN,

Sa pamamagitan ng makatotohanang mga survey ay nalpahiwatig na po ninyo kung sino ang inyong napupusuang kandidato sa pagka-bise presidente.

Kung sino ang inyong totoong KAIBIGAN, KASANGGA, KARAMAY at KAPANALIG na siya ninyong mapagkakatiwalaan ng inyong boto.

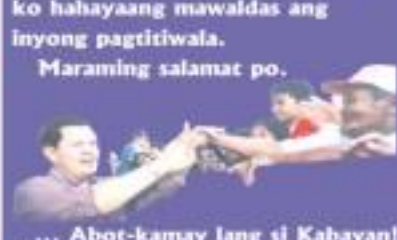
Sa darating na Lunes, Mayo 10, 2004, isasakatuparan na natin ang lahat ng mga pahiwatig sa survey. Isulat lang po sa balota:

PRESIDENT
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

VICE PRESIDENT
Noli "Kabayan" De Castro

Asahan ninyo't hinding-hindi ko hahayaang mawaldas ang inyong pagtitiwala.

Maraming salamat po.



... Abot-kamay lang si Kabayan!

Paid Advertisement

Campaign violence cases on the rise

SAN MIGUEL, Bulacan—A policeman in uniform was hurt after five armed men, believed to be supporters of incumbent Mayor Manuel Hernando, shot it out with local police near the mayor's house on Wednesday night.

PO3 Abdul Nazario suffered a bullet wound in the leg during the gunfight at about 8 p.m. Wednesday.

The firearm used by Nazario failed to work because of ammunition. But Manuel Mabanlu, Hernando's private secretary, said Hernando was not employing armed men.

"The mayor trusts by himself alone. he goes out of his house. It is not possible that the armed men are his supporters," Mabanlu said.

In Pangasinan, the administrator slayings of Alcala and Villasis, reportedly receiving death threats recently.

Mayor Jeanita Celeste of Alcala said he received a bloodstained Tagalog, a white candle tied with a black ribbon and a live bullet in his house on Thursday.

In Pampanga, two supporters of Mayoralty Mayor Consuelo Leong were harassed by the campaign leaders of her rival, Ike Pamintuan, on Tuesday night, police said.

Senior Insp. Rosalino Lazaga, Mayantoc police chief, identified the victims as Orlando Flores and Proceso Zaldana.

Senior Supt. Nestor Ines Mendoza, Pangasinan police director, said the two men were beaten up by barangay captain Gari Flores, a relative of Ilocos Governor Amado Espino. Flores, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau and Noranda Sevilla, PDI Central Luzon Desk

₱23-B Panay rail project junked

DABLON

KALIBO CITY—Senator Panfilo Lacson said the planned rehabilitation of the ₱23-billion Panay railways project would not push through because the National Economic Development Authority (Neda) did not approve the project.

"The Neda disapproved it because it seems it seems to be unviable. We're talking here of a 117-kilometer railway project. We could just imagine how much would a one-kilometer section alone cost under the scheme," he said.

Now that the project had been shelved, Dobie said about 5,000 squatters living along the railway track need not worry about eviction.

The Panay Railways Inc. (PRI) operated the railway system that connected Iloilo City to Roxas City in Capiz. It, however, closed shop in the mid-1980s after encountering financial difficulties.

But the government identified the Panay railways as one of the five railway systems in the country which it planned to rehabilitate.

The Neda, however, studied the project and found it financially and economically unviable.

This was welcomed in the April 17 letter of Iloilo chair Ramón Nel to JC Orilla Bulseng, chair of the Philippine National Investment Development Corp., to whom her chair the body's disapproval of the project. Roy Peñillo, PhilNews Bureau

110 East Visayas areas on watch list

By Joey A. Gabieza
PhilNews Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—With less than a week before elections, the Philippine National Police in Eastern Visayas has identified 110 areas in the region as places where election-related violence are likely to occur.

But Chief Supt. Bonifacio Ceñeza, police regional director, said there was no need to place any of those areas under the control of the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

"We are still control the situation. Placing any part of Eastern Visayas under Comelec control will be a black eye to us all, not only to the PNP. It will be construction issue that the entire region is in trouble in terms of peace and order," Ceñeza said in Leyte.

Coordination

He added there was close coordination between the police, the military and the Comelec to prevent violence during the elections.

Sen. Rodolfo Santos, deputy commanding general of the 8th Infantry Division based in Samar, said his men were ready to be deployed to help keep the peace.

The 8th ID has three main battalions—the 801st based in Tacloban town, Samar; 802nd based in Borongan town, Samar; 803rd based in Brgy. Lonoy and 803rd based in Catarman, Northern Samar.

The PNP classified as immediate areas of concern 26 towns and cities while the remaining 84 were labeled as areas of concern.

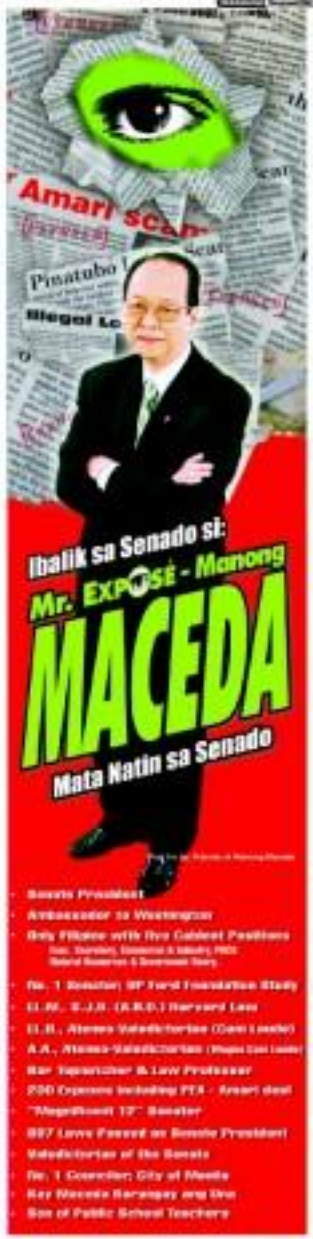
Supt. Pio Simon, PNP regional chief operations officer, said a locality is identified as immediate areas of concern if election-related violence is likely to occur during and after the May 10 elections due to the presence of partisan armed groups, intense political rivalry and presence of private armies.

Leyte is on the top list of election-related violence are also tallied as areas of concern, he added.

Of the six provinces in Eastern Visayas, only the Catanduanes is not classified as areas of immediate concern with eight whole towns; Eastern Samar and Northern Samar have six each.

Ormoc City and the towns of Albuera, Kananga, Merida, Palompon, San Isidro, and Villaba in Leyte were classified as immediate areas of concern.

The police placed Tacloban and 16 towns in Leyte on red alert.



A14 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2004

INQUIRER

OPINION

Depravity

GEORGE W. Bush went before two hand-picked Arabic television stations (one funded by the US government), and bewailed the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by American troops without making a direct apology. The apology he left to generals. But neither the apology nor the tacky expression of disgust has managed to pacify Arabs or Americans.

EDITORIAL What some American soldiers (and contractual workers for the US army) did to the Iraqi prisoners has been exemplified by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba (a Filipino-American) in a report. It is a catalog of obscenity and depravity and deserves to be listed in full.

Punching, slapping and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet; videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees; forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually-explicit positions for photographing; forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days or a time; forcing naked male detainees to wear women's underwear; forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate while being photographed and videotaped; arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them; positioning a naked detainee on a MRE (meal, ready-to-eat) Box, with a strap around his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes and penis to simulate electric torture; writing "I am a Rapist" (sic) on the leg of a detainee alleged to have forcibly raped a 15-year-old fellow detainee, and then photographing him naked; placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female soldier pose for a picture; a male MP guard having sex with a female detainee; using military working dogs (without muzzles) to intimidate and frighten detainees; biting and severely injuring a detainee; taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees. These are the abuses that have been documented through videos and photographs and testimony.

Arab media have pointed out that as early as November last year, some of these horrors were already taking allegations of abuse. The Iraqi people aren't particularly surprised by the photos of abuses that have leaked out, because such behavior was already being whispered about all along. For many Iraqis, their suspicions have merely been confirmed. For many Arabs, the photos circulated by the media serve as definitive proof that America does not act in good faith, or with sincerity. Never has the disparity between official American rhetoric and real American answers been so gross, or so gravely damning. For many Americans, it is a face of their country and countrymen that has inspired horror and rightful indignation. But for American officials and military bases, it is a face they will wish to drop—or downplay.

They cannot sweep this under the rug. There were conveyances won't let them, and the world won't let them. To the rest of the world, which has a longer memory of American behavior than the Americans themselves, the recent revelations are nothing new. At the turn of the 20th century, American troops delighted in posing for grisly photos with the propped-up bodies of dead Filipino troops. American horror today is the heir of horror over the water cure used against Filipinos, and the Mylai massacre in Vietnam.

The fact that revelations has swept the United States speaks well of the innate decency of many Americans. The demands for an investigation and swift action cannot be ignored. However, what American politicians, soldiers and civilians must realize is that their presence in Iraq and their involvement in the Middle East have been eclipsed of all pretensions to legitimacy and idealism. Not for the world, much of which never granted America legitimacy, but for Americans themselves. They are faced with the stark reality of the nature of their occupation of Iraq—one that is grounded on an arrogant disdain for public opinion and built on a foundation of naked aggression which reduces them to being at par with the regime they displanted.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld recently argued that "Regarding the men, I think, it is fundamentally extraordinarily of what took place." He was referring to respectful comparisons of the behavior of US troops in the Abu Ghraib prison to that of the torture squads of Saddam Hussein. The behavior of the abusive troops and their contractual taxpoint staff is worse. Saddam's was a brutal dictatorship built on fear; America proclaimed itself as something much, much better, motivated by altruism, characterized by decency. Faced with behavior to the contrary, it has resorted to trying to manage information. And its leader does not even have the decency to make a proper apology, either to the Iraqis or to his own people.

Whom NOT to vote for on Monday

THREE days from now will be the moment of truth, we will troop to the polls to exercise our right to choose the leaders who will govern us for the next three and six years, we pretend, we will donate from among the hundreds of a multi-ed; "a bumbling actor, a murderous cop, a very sick lawyer, a religious hack, and an incestuous widget." Not a very good field to choose from.

For members of Congress and local officials, we have to choose from members of political dynasties (banned by the Constitution but not enforced by the government), the lying, prevaricating, stealing and corrupt traditional politicians, the concerned teammates who believe they are God's gift to humanity, those who run for public office "for the fundn of it," and plain airheads. Not much to choose from, either.

Gone were the days when we had Bonifacio, Laurels, Tañadas and Mabinis to choose from, brilliant leaders who truly loved their country and its people. Here we are left only with the dregs: the moral ones who know next to nothing of the business of governing laws, and dirty rogues who know too much of the loopholes to be able to steal the people.

Which is probably why, in this late date, a great many voters (more than 10 percent, according to the surveys, which translates to more than four million votes) are still undecided on whom to vote for.

Many people—drivers, maids, workers, administrators, lawyers and businessmen—asked me for advice on whom to vote for, thinking that I know more than they. But I cannot tell them whom to vote for. Not just as beneficiaries of the next guy till I can tell them to whom not to vote for, without giving names but only general guidelines. Here they are:

1. Do not vote for corrupt incumbent government officials, even if the corruption has not yet been proven in court. They steal from us now; they will always steal from us in the future.

2. Do not vote for members of family dynasties (those are exemptions, of course). Generations of their families have already ruled us. Even but have not improved them. Time to break

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

his iron hand. They may prove to be worse than the old ones. And there is at least a 60 percent chance that they may be worse.

3. Do not vote for a candidate just because he has impressive credentials, such as a college degree. Even a string of them doesn't guarantee good performance, as we have already experienced repeatedly. We all have classmates who were brilliant in school but who were not successful in life, and classmates who were below in class but who excelled in real life, who succeeded in the school of hard knocks. In short, don't be an elitist. Emphasize job efficiency with school diplomas as a badge of honor when we have a family-oriented system that does not really educate the young.

4. Don't vote for a candidate just because your neighbor leader told you to. Don't let them take away your freedom of choice. Say "yes" if you have to, but vote for your own choice anyway.

5. Don't sell your vote. The candidate who buys your vote just will put his back in the money from the taxes you pay. If he has no problem about violating the law now, he will always violate the law to the future.

6. Don't vote for candidates who have their posters and streamers in places prohibited by law. This only proves that they have no qualms of millions of our taxes just to remove them and clean public places. The only way you can punish these candidates and teach them a lesson is not to vote for them. If they can violate the law with impunity while they are not yet in power, imagine what they will do when they get into power.

7. Finally, don't vote for the insane. There are a lot of them running around.

The Supreme Court has thrown out two petitions that sought to make our elections more coherent and less. One made its ring-in-laptops leaders from dictating to their flocks whom to vote for the other wants to prevent the publication of political surveys before an election. The petitioners claimed they unduly, unfairly and illegally influence people in what they will vote for. Both petitions are the opinion of all the others. The highest court of the land refused to intervene, on the grounds that to do so would be to curtail the people's freedom of expression and of choice.

I'm not an ordained as lawyers and janitors, so I think the Court erred on the side of frivolity. It made the spirit of the Constitution subservient to the technicalities. It is no secret that courts would rather sidestep difficult issues if it can use technicalities to justify abdicating its responsibility. That's what the Court did.

The provisions on the separation of church and state was put in the Constitution precisely to stop what we are experiencing now: religious leaders meddling in the affairs of government. This meddling was what allowed the abuses of the friars during the Spanish regime, in the Inquisition, and even in the 20th century, in the genocide ordered by the ayatollahs.

To be sure, the Supreme Court did not rule that religious groups like the Iglesia ni Cristo have the constitutional right to dictate to their followers whom to vote for and don't violate the provision on the separation of church and state. Instead, it stirred the question by saying that the petition was technically defective and that preventing the religious leaders from dictating to their flocks and survey firms from publishing the results of their surveys would deprive all of them of the freedom of expression and of choice.

I beg to disagree. I think that on the contrary, the decision deprives the people of their freedom of choice. (To be continued)

Stand your ground

I LIKED the part in "The Last Samurai" where Katsumoto (Ken Watanabe) asks Nathan Algren (Tom Cruise), "What happened to the musketeers at Thermopylae?"

He asks this while they are lying in the trenches, waiting for the enemy in five to last volley. Algren had told Katsumoto the story earlier: "There was once a battle at a place called Thermopylae. Three hundred brave Greeks held off a Persian army of a million men. For two days, the Greeks made them pay so dearly for the Persian army lost all taste for battle and were defeated soon after."

Here, before their own enemy lines, in last resort, Katsumoto asks that question, "What happened to the musketeers at Thermopylae?" Algren replies: "Greeks fought for Greece."

Katsumoto smiles. He is pleased with the answer. They jump out of the trenches and rush the enemy.

That map of course dictates all the actions on the field. Allies, alliances—and betrayals—will be built for those who cannot grasp the concept. All things that are larger than life will always oppose superpowers to those who are smaller than life. But it's that kind of romantic talk that frustrates.

I do not know how much of "The Last Samurai" actually happened. The point is it aims to think of those who fought the emperor's false advisers or survived in the memory of the last rebirth is where anyone can really survive in the end and not be false advisers who disappeared there.

I do know that Leonidas and his 300 Spartans held off former legions at the pass at Thermopylae, give or take the romantic magnificence all history that passes on is legend is lost to. Though Xerxes was finally able to oust the Greek defenders after being thrown another time from the pass by a traitor, and though he was able to burn Athens and destroy the Acropolis, he himself was pushed back. He suffered a major defeat at Plataea a year later at the hands of another Spartan leader, Pausanias, and 14 years later Cimon, a Greek general, destroyed his army and navy at the Battle of Eurymedon.

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

At the very least, what all this says is that history dwells often produce very positive results in the long run, if not immediately. Immediately, it may simply lead to the introduction of the heroes. Britain Constantinople thanks to "I Pan Bridesmaid," "his account of Philippine history, is that it was the accumulation of small results that happened that produced the big one in 1898. It is a perfectly defensible idea. It is borne out in real life. Heroism, like manure and energy, never really goes to waste.

One may of course say that it all very well for Tom who benefits from their actions. But what about those who carried them out? They won't be around to see the effects of their death.

Ah, but that's the most magical part of it. They don't have to, because in its own reward. Nobility is its own justification. Being the right thing to do is its own story. That is the reason Socrates smiles at the thought of the 300 Spartans perishing in the end. Therefore the battle were one, he has already won a victory. He has won a victory by fighting that way, he has won a victory by dying that way. Wherever the battle turns out, the victory was lost.

All this story seem like a very long-winded and off-tangent way to argue for the idea of voting wisely, but it is not. Voting wisely is the country has taken on the aspect of sounding like a parrot. Like Leonidas or Katsumoto, against the legions of ignorance, inertia, and a sheer refusal to think.

How to protect the enemy is, you will find in the unrelenting commentaries and exhortations for you to go to the side of the "vote wise," the one who has the best one or the charisma, the one who has the ads or the surveys behind him or her. None of it has to do with principle, none of it has to do with right and wrong, everything of it has to do only with "pragmatism," the last refuge of the cynical. We do not have to go far in our lives thoroughly the enemy surrounds you. In packings of family or friends, you will hear it every time. Vote for the one who is the you win. Vote for "the winner." It is rarely you that explicitly, of course, but that is the subtext of the token about the candidate you believe in being just a blimp in the fringes of the radar screen.

Voting wisely is merely sounding your ground. You stand your ground, you win.

In the very least, unlike a battle where the powers that control it can, in the same the troops beat, here it has inside of you, it the sure you hold in your hands. The principle remains that if you vote for a candidate, he or she wins, if you do not, he or she does not. Taintable is contagious, and good example the most contagious of all. Enough people get to think like you, your candidate wins.

Even if your candidate does not, you do. Doing the right thing, or following your conscience, however you want to look at it, is never lost or misplaced. It always makes other things possible. You first Edsa did not begin with Ninoy's death, it began with the deaths of the many activists who first raised what at time and last. You refuse to lose voices today to the pressure of voting for the lesser of two evils when you can simply vote for the better of two goods, you will make it possible for the right candidate to win tomorrow.

And, finally, whatever happens in the elections, you win by the very act of doing what is right. by the very exercise of following your conscience. I hesitate to be overwhelmed, nobility is in its own justification. Acting the right thing is its own justification. Acting the right thing is its own story. However the battle terminates, you will already have won. However the battle turns out, your enemy will have already lost.

Voting wisely is just smiling ruthlessly after you hear your team it all but lost. And nothing to stare for your candidate anyway.

Villanueva's middle-class armies

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

MIO Eddie Villanueva is the first religious leader to run for president, relying on a born-again Christian constituency to shoulder him on to Malacañang. Other religious leaders, like those of Iglesia ni Cristo and El Shaddai, have mapped their campaigning politically. They have lobbied clandestine to mobilize the sectarian vote as a voting block in the effort to influence presidential election outcomes. The INC's and El Shaddai's considerations are larger than those of Brother Eddie Villanueva's campaign.

If the secular politicians are not alarmed at the entry of the evangelist Villanueva into the presidential arena, the reason seems to be that they do not consider him a serious threat to win the election. Opinion surveys place him last in the field of accredited presidential candidates, taking no more than 3 percent. So, many dismiss Villanueva as spiritual fluff.

What interests many is how Villanueva has been drawing large crowds to his political rallies — reportedly his last rally at the corner of Edsa and 20th Ave. Caloocan, where he claimed nearly one million packed this square. Space calculators at the press room where the news agencies gather estimate the square's capacity at 300,000.

Clearly, Villanueva is more attractive than Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, but a deeper sociological background than Pres. Estrada's former basis is required to explain the phenomenon. Villanueva, a graduate of the Philippine Bible Institute and, among others, awarded a master's course in the University of the Philippines, Diliman, is a charismatic preacher. He has an organization of nearly every town under the Philippine political sun and his platform address, "Kaya Natin" (We Can Do It), is a litany of the highest deficit, poverty, unemployment, capital punishment, globalization, the pork barrel, the environment, constitutional change, terrorism, foreign debt, corruption, tax policy, population management, and most of all, corruption.

These problematic appeal to be the interests that have attracted middle-class people to his movement's standard. He seems at home in corruption, as once he shares with the other candidates opposing President Macapagal-Arroyo. He too

(CONTINUED ON PAGE A11)

A born campaigner

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IT had always been a mystery to me why President Macapagal-Arroyo should wind up his three years in office suffering from an unsavory public image, trailing in popularity behind "Da King" of action movies, Fernando Poe Jr., whose only claim to fame was a career who'd been killed in drug syndicates, and screwing and snubbing her way to street headlines.

I have a theory: the moment of no answer to the impromptu query whistling TV footage of GMA at the campaign trail, I couldn't help seeing how the perceived intimacies and cues even as she made her way during the campaign, were offered by the reality tested like she was entering herself 1M3 cards, which appeared to have had booked stores to be a guidance of dinner's display of pleasure for the last few months, now needed guidance and reflection. Her body language, once so crafted a modest assistant especially when she tried "sincerity" among the lavish pool, seems to have gained fluency.

Take the last biggest love for herself. Poe Jr., who still commands throngs of fans and believers reluctant to part, has appeared increasingly strained and stilted. His shift in his mood and the way he delivers his lines, his body language, his facial expressions — his tendency are reflected in his declining relationship with the media people covering his campaign. So, insofar how many people you draw to your rallies, the media are still in charge of your image, and reaching beyond your target field.

• • •

MAYBE Sheikha's new-found "bounce" is due to her improving numbers in the surveys, to the impression of "electability" aroused by dutiful campaigning, or to a combination of both.

Indeed, confidence and the seeming accessories of victory are said to always be the sign of a candidate, whose every show of confidence could demoralize opponents, and draw voters like moths to the flame.

Like to entertain elections, there are independent senatorial candidates. Hardly known and with limited financial resources, it is doubtful if any of them can duplicate the feat of Sen. Bob Guingona and Sen. Gregorio Honasan of winning in the Senate without aligning or anything themselves with a major political party.

If the right kind of senators is elected, the Senate can regain its prestige as a forum for intelligent and meaningful discussion of proposed legislation. Today, the Senate is a forum for self-aggrandizement can't seem to decide whether they want to be Sherlock Holmes or the legendary Solon.

As the drop of a bit of whatever a senator wishes to see himself in the future, the Senate can also serve as a training ground for the next generation of leaders.

The Senate's role of legislation no longer fits the needs of the times. Fresh ideas and new blood like a magnet. Hooray — to the progress of in-a-meaningful.

That I think what we're here seeing the past weeks is a politician rediscovering, or plumbing whether successfully late, the key to campaigning, and taking to the thrill of the chase like a seasoned veteran.

GMA is a natural politician, and her instincts have always been honed around the art of political compromise and advantage, rather than on provocation based on principle or vision. Which is precisely what gives her the chance to those who are still searching for a presidential candidate to support but are leaning toward GMA already on matter PFC's popularity.

With money for GMA on May 10 now become a former President? There are those who say that, which no one elections to prepare for, the night prove more willing to challenge vested interests. But the way she's been behaving, she seems done as a vindication of her policies and performance in the past, evidence her seriousness, many of which are downright wrong, instead of making her more vulnerable and defensive.

GMA has already proven herself a great campaigner. What she will needs to convince us is that she can be an even better President.

• • •

All the PFC certainly noticeable is the lavery born hardliners of elections ads, including two that stand out because they appear to be directed at non-less personally ignored and neglected by his camp.

The first is an ad in which PFC is shown, full framed, silent and channeling his inner mountain, addressing the viewer and announcing his plans for his first 100 days in office. In office is

Senate choices

COMMENTARY

Raoul J. Fabiliera

are headed to help meet the challenges posed by globalization and international terrorism as our people, like former President Fidel Ramos now right, about to said it's time for the younger generation to take over the nation's leadership.

This is not to denigrate the capability of the chronologically challenged (that's the politically correct term for senior citizens), but the candidates' ability to get your kindergarten secretary have had their chance of running (or winning?) the country. The time has come for them to cede from the political scene to give the younger generation of salesmen Filipinos the opportunity to clean up the mess that we've inherited from the present administration.

On Monday, I will cast my vote for the candidate who I think are not tied down to the multi-visual ways of doing business and can think out of the box in solving the country's economic and social problems.

The top of my list is Bob Gordon. As senior secretary of President Macapagal-Arroyo, he came up with programs that kept the country in the economic trap despite the adverse politicking generated by the members of the Alan Sayyaf bunch. He is now the chairman of the Metro Manila Development Authority but his years of experience preserved the former US naval base and transformed it into a world-class commercial and industrial complex.

Next is Mar Roxas. The measures he implemented when he was trade and industry secretary encouraged the entry of foreign investments into areas that brought out the best in Filipino creativity and ensuring the expansion in revenue. Roxas' finesse and grasp of the problems of investors made will be helpful in striking the logistic parting because for many voters, that is the first time they would have YES talk seriously about it — or, in very more than a casual line, for that matter.

My knee-jerk reaction upon first catching sight of the ad was: "Sayawa po!" After months of relative sweating and bombing by the media, and his equally vanities spraying of those effects, marking his debut as a political leader in the lowest terms, now he sees the need to tell voters what he plans to do as president. You think, too late, I say.

The second ad is obviously directed at young voters. In it, PFC is shown in a variety of young people rapping the reasons for their support of PFC. I guess the HIP finally woke up and studied the demographics. PFC is particularly unpopular among the young, who are the ones who are always online. It takes more than a stunt ad to overcome the young people's idealism and their optimism about new politicians, especially given PFC's relation for most of the campaign.

• • •

WHILE politicians and political parties will be holding their respective "rolling de-crowns" in their dime store campaigns, the real ground for the elections, literally, Plaza will be holding "Prayers de Alcazar" later today.

In Cebu, a "Prayers de Alcazar" will be held at 4 p.m. at Puerto de Dalaguete, with different parties' prayer groups, the different top members of the Holy Rosary, and all together praying for clean and honest elections and for the elected few of more interest in Congress as well as in other national and local posts.

In Manila, Mother Pilar Rodriguez and dentists will be joining the Mass for Clean, Honest and Peaceful Elections at 12 noon at the San Agustin Church, upon the invitation of Vice President Cory Aquino and Archbishop Cardenal Ricardo, and with the five presidential candidates, their supporters and other candidates.

Let's all pray that the results of the elections be finalized, and for the good of our country, our people and that they truly reflect the will of the people who certainly deserve nothing less than our public has learn to be brave willingness able candidates.

Trust, healing and democracy

WITH ELECTIONS just a few days away, I thought of sharing a modified version of the R. U. Sibal Memorial Lecture which I delivered yesterday at the annual convention of the Philippine College of Physicians.

There is a growing body of social science research showing the pivotal role of trust within societies. Trust, according to the political scientist Francis Fukuyama, is the lubricant that makes any group or organization run efficiently. In a tragic result of trust have been found to help stabilize democratic institutions, which in turn engenders good "subjective well being," better known to many of us as happiness.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

In studies such as the World Values Survey, the Philippines has been found to be a low-trust society. Similar findings have been reported by private groups, with the Filipinos including research "external group orientation," mainly the family and peer groups as the barkada. Beyond these domains, we tend to be more mistrustful, with many negative consequences such as impotent and corruption, even our weak sense of nationhood.

Low social exchanges also already erode democratic institutions that we have. For example, as trust deteriorates, societies become more difficult to govern. The issue sequence is at passionate issues which arouse severe passions, which only little trust mistrust, especially if the laws are too enforced uniformly. As societies become less open to trust, contractual politicians become more appealing with their promises of peace and order, usually by dispensing with human rights. The sad reality though is that to use brutal methods to survive, trust levels sink even more, decisions and choices requiring its power by keeping people suspicious of motivations.

Our low trust levels are not new or accidental. They are the product of a whole historical heritage, brought about by many factors ranging from people split to social institutions. In the Philippine context, colonialism benefited from keeping us divided, hunted by narrow family and regionalistic loyalties rather than dangerous nationalistic sentiments. Feudalism also played an important role, emphasizing absolute loyalty to landlords and political warlords by keeping people dependent.

There is a relationship between our low levels of trust and the state of our political society. We were based on loyalties for relatives, for a strong man, for someone of the same ethnicity or of the same "kind" of class. Thus, we have historically more descendants of traditional politicians too (rather than moving toward issue-based politics, we have mostly shifted our choices around new players such as movie stars and media personalities. The fact is that our trust remains limited to people we know, and this is why we have no longer than the personalities who literally invade our living rooms and bedrooms somewhat nine each day.

The elections actually offer an opportunity for trust-building, especially with younger people.

First, amid recent improvements, get out and vote on May 10. Despite the clear inadequacies, a high voter turnout suggests we still have some trust in our political processes.

Second, treat the young to make wise choices. The worst that could happen is for parents to abstain in their children who they should vote for, especially if the choices are made between the lesser of two evils. Instead, it is recommended that parents who endorse candidates simply because of personal ties but are right to talk about making "educated" or "wise" choices. Worse, such endorsements tell our young people that they should only trust the small networks provided for them.

Explain that it is not enough to select whom we vote for, but also how we vote (and the use to young) as we through the glasses the empty rhetoric, the inanities of politicians. In one, he advised to show how upset you are with candidates like John Osmeña, with his claim that it was his duty to have children to help him in his business and without provision on family planning is given as: "Let's have more people and 20 more million Filipinos to support."

Third, take this one to explain government and why it is important to trust into the positions taken by the candidates on various issues. Explain that campaigns are times to build trust-mistrust and to help people make choices. And I will endorse every position.* The positions of presidential and senatorial candidates can be found in two Internet sites: www.2p.com.com and www.2004 Senate Votes.htm.

Fourth, demonstrate your trust in principled politicians. Thank those who have made a difference in our lives whenever you think it has qualified, even if the public opinion surveys show him or her trailing far behind. Set-backs have to show other people if we don't trust our own convictions.

Fifth, understand that trust-building will be a slow process, filled with disappointments and frustrations. Some of the elements, patterns of disappointment about the grim metaphor) and explain why certain people will seem despite their lack of clear morals or issues. I'm afraid there will be all too many examples of how people will who based simply on glitter and name recognition. Explain why we need to attain better days in the future, we can choose from seasons and sets of information.

Identify mentors: the people we elect into office, holding them accountable to the positions they stated on various issues. No doubt, we will regret some of our choices, but we are not doomed to repeat mistakes if we learn from them. And we can appreciate the power of collective action to put members and sins of integrity into public office. Then, and only then will we understand the axiom about public office being a public trust.

I will end by using a medical metaphor. Our levels of trust can be compared to the integrity of our bodies' defense and immune systems. A low-trust society is like a person whose defenses are compromised, which makes him or her more vulnerable to diseases and complications. A low-trust society is assailed by many viruses or cells, of people unwilling to believe in anything, which leads to more unemployment and poverty, in which further insensible injustice, driving innocent away and our doctors into meaningless to their carnivorous.

Building trust can be compared to building up a patient's natural immune system. We know that the best of medicines and technologies are useless without that defense system being mobilized. In the same way that our progress for a people depends to a large extent on the restoration of his or her immune system, we will find true it is to regain levels of trust that allow us to proceed to good progress for our country as it tries to overcome its many problems. Want to live just a little more for efficiency it is our powerful forces that bring people together, or encouraging them to transform trauma into victims, and citizens into trusting.

The INQUIRER is a member of the PHILIPPINE PRESS INSTITUTE

LETTERS

The magnificence of Nature Philippines

FOR three days last week, I momentarily forgot images of our political candidates smiling and smiling, promising the moon and the stars while on their campaign sorties, masquerading as the answer to our manifold national woes. I was with a group that included a Canadian couple-consultants who explored the wilderness of Cordillera. When I thought to be on ordinary expedition to the Banaue Rice Terraces and Sagada was more than what I expected. Clear boating the Ifugao-Bontoc-Benguet-Nueva Vizcaya-Pangasinan-Ilocos Sur-La Union-Baguio-Benguet route in one continuous movement and nature-watching every 5 minutes, I reminisced my favorite beauty and grandeur of Kinnaida and Colosseum in Australia, the Hanging Gardens of Indonesia, the Golden Heights of Israel, and the grapevineyards in the Napa Valley of California. Truly, our country is comparable with the best of the whole world in terms of exotic scenic attractions.

Our Canadian companions were fascinated by the wonder of Banaue and the many tiers of Sagada. They were speechless while witnessing Bontoc and Baguio. I, too, was particularly overwhelmed by the magnificence of the expansive Baguio vegetable terraces which boasted of the species' enduring ingenuity, industry and creativity. While on the trip, I continuously blurted out to the Canadians, "I am very, very proud to be a Filipino."

Indeed, our country terms with places worthy to be explored and appreciated. Let's not wait for foreigners to tell us how beautiful and charming our country is. Cannot our Department of Tourism be just as aggressive in promoting these places as major tourist destinations as it is for Boracay, Palawan, Cebu, Subic, Tagaytay, etc.?

Meanwhile, let's forget politics. Go, explore the underrated countryside visits that abound in our country. Let's feel proud to be Filipinos!

—ANTONIO O. DORIOSA,
Dean, Marian Jesus Marcos Memorial Main University, Batanguas, La Union

Vote for statesmen

ELECTION positions in the Philippines have become too expensive. Most often than not, a candidate has to spend for the campaign more money than he could recover in legitimate compensation from the public office he aspires of for.

Because our voters are generally poor and ignorant, taken amounts of cash usually work wonders in our elections. Moneyed men, therefore, and especially the nouveau riches, have the edge over those who are ready for poorer choice when weighed in terms of competence and dedication to service.

When we examine the cause of elevating scandals spending much into office, we do not have to search and suffer only from last year's mistakes officials under this will ultimately follow his energy ways to get a proportionate share of the funds. The result would be a vicious system of plunder by the public treasury

Role of Estore Exchange in survey

With refers to a detail in your story wherein you wrote that "Estore Exchange... tabulated and encoded the data for SBN Trends." (PIR, 4/26/04)

May I clarify that SBN Trends handled all the interviews, encoding and collection of data, tabulation and processing of the information gathered during a nationwide survey conducted from April 20-22, 2004.

Estore Exchange's role was to receive and store the data that were processed and sent by SBN Trends to our secure database system. The SBN Trends data were uploaded and stored in our database tables accordingly.

—A. DONALDO,
president and CEO,
Estore Exchange,
[jane.lusad.project.com.ph]

Bayan Muna's biased response to NPA extortion

THE PROPOSAL of the Bayan Muna nominees to "refer take the moral counterfeit approach of addressing the legitimate issues of armed conflict rather than simply condemn the NPA" (PIR, 4/30/04) enhancement completion of its fatal with the shoulders group and armed. ensure a humanitarian and human rights humanitarian committed by this group. It should be reminded that peace talks are of their way between this group and the government, and one consensus approach in his Bayan Muna to propose to the CPP-NDFP and GRP panels to address the legitimate issues of armed conflict or the negotiating table.

The NPA should not point to guns as the people and other party for groups to take advantage of the current through extortion and harassment in form of its preferred party for groups.

Extortion and harassment are clear violations of human rights. Erasing people against their will or even to use to take certain conditions or groups is an affront to their civil liberties. What changes can we expect from that group and to educate about their united cause from a simple request for human rights?

—FR. OSCAR ARIZ, SVD,
chair, Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (Pahra), 414 Mabini St., Barangay Pinyahan, QC

A resounding no to OFW taxation

I AM a 40-year-old physician who gave up a comfortable internal medicine practice in the Philippines to learn new medical knowledge and skills practiced in world-recognized medical centers here in Singapore. I have read with disgust and dismay the plan to tax overseas Filipino workers. The government could instead penalized should limit the parasite of killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

I already lost my respect for the Philippine government after several months of working here in Singapore. I may lose my hope for the government and my Filipino citizenship soon. OFWs are taxed, my health care colleagues have pointed out that since we become citizens of a foreign country, we cease to be OFWs. hence, no longer obliged to pay any taxes to the Philippine government. Many OFWs may resort to this silent tactic since they are taxed.

—DR. CARL B. DALUZON,
National Neurosciences Institute, Singapore, carlmd@pacific.net.sg

Taxing OFWs

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

Some politicians in the Philippines do not know what they are doing. They do not know the manner of public service. They themselves are brainwashed in our lawmaking huge business. Let's be honest for once. Now, that the hardworking OFWs are the golden target for corrupt and self-serving politicians through progressive taxation. It's time for OFWs to march together in protests and stop this tremendous proposed plan. Now if OFWs will remit P50 billion a year, some politicians will just ask for more "milk and goats." Nothing is enough in stealth mind. Be just to be among the ones of the kind who keep the Philippine economy and no P.000 islands afloat. So to OFW progressive movement.—Emmy Vicario, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

The Bureau of manual Revenue thinks that "highly paid Filipino workers abroad, such as engineers and ship captains, should share their incomes with the Philippine government." I think that lowly paid tax officials who own mansions and expensive cars should share their huge income with the Philippine government. Who knows, maybe even just a quarter of their income will be enough to solve the deficit ball? I remember C. Duvas in Manila Yi-Hilton, returns.? instead of getting to the root of the problem, he opted to just patch it up—just like dental filling.

I think self-preservation of taxes is not a problem. Taxes are collected all right. Where this go after collection is the problem. Therefore, collecting more taxes will not solve the problem. It just means that tax officials will have more. —Gonzalo Reyes, "Ah Chu Kang Road Singapore, r@cs-mail

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"That in all things God may be glorified."

PHILIPPINE SHIPBUILDERS AND REPAIRERS ASSOCIATION

IN SUPPORT OF . . . .

The Maritime Industry Authority
(MARINA)

For the laudable decision of MARINA Administrator Atty. Oscar M. Sevilla of not renewing the operating permits of the vessels of Negros Navigation Co. last 23 April 2004, **because of the company's failure to prove beyond doubt that they are financially capable to operate their fleet safely and efficiently** and serve public interest as required by the Public Service Act.

For the MARINA's firm resolve of standing by its decision despite its unpopularity, with the long-term common good as its primary concern.

FOR THE OTHER PLAYERS IN THE SHIP REPAIR INDUSTRY TO BE WARY . . . .

That Negros Navigation has been jumping from one drydocking facility to another because of its reported inability to pay its outstanding dues.

TO THE RIDING PUBLIC TO BE FORWARNED . . . .

That one cannot expect a cash-strapped shipping company to be fully compliant with all safety (and operational) requirements to efficiently operate its fleet. ***Negros Navigation is many months behind on their payments of their insurance premiums.***

TO THE FILIPINO TAX PAYER AND THE B.I.R.

Negros Navigation has unpaid taxes amounting to over P440 million which carry with it certain criminal liabilities.

RP embassies, consulates brace for upsurge of absentee votes

By Jerome Aning

PHILIPPINE EMBASSIES and consulates around the world are gearing up for the upsurge of absentee voters with only three days left before balloting ends.

The Department of Foreign Affairs yesterday said that based on partial reports from the overseas diplomatic posts, more than 100,000 overseas Filipinos have cast their ballots with Hong Kong and Singapore leading in total votes tally.

The number comprises about half the total of registered voters. In his weekly press conference, Foreign Secretary Delia Albert reminded appeals to Filipinos abroad to vote as soon as they could so that they would not overwhelm the overseas precincts on May 10.

Albert, however, said the Philippine embassies and consulates have given their assurances that they were ready to handle the final surge of absentee votes this weekend.

Catherine Macoda, vice chair of the 2004 Overseas Absentee Voting Secretariat, said the 577 overseas precincts are manned each by Commission-appointed boards of election inspectors. Other OIAEs are on standby particularly in the 11 voting centers with the greatest number of anticipated voter turnouts, Macoda said.

In Japan, Canada and the United Kingdom, where the absentee voting is done by mail, the filled-up ballots were beginning to be returned to the embassies and consulates.

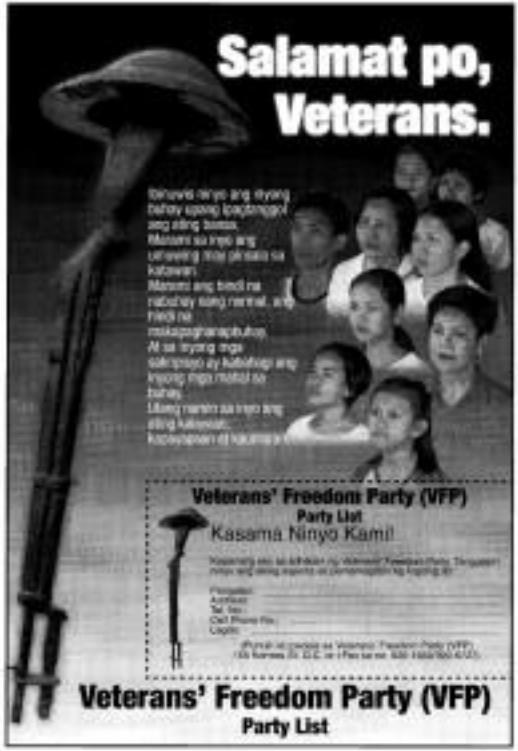
In Japan, however, some 1,000 mailed ballots were returned because of incorrect addresses.

The embassies in Hungary and Romania, with only 20 and 13 voters, have finished voting and were allowed to close their precincts. The one in Panama, however, could still be opened if the last voter shows up.

The precincts would close as exactly 3 p.m. May 10, Manila time. This translates to 7 p.m. in New Zealand, 10 a.m. in most Middle Eastern countries, 7 a.m. in London and Paris, 2 a.m., May 9 in New York City and Washington D.C. and 9 p.m., May 9 in Hawaii.

The party would immediately begin tallying and would not stop until all ballots are canvassed.

In Manila, Albert said the DFA and the Commission on Elections would set up an OAV Monitoring and Action Center at the DFA main office in Pasay City to initially receive copies of the certificates of canvassing and canvassing forms from the various posts.



Bro. Eddie rally draws 1M in rally

Front page 1

7:30 p.m. He said that if they stayed at the park until midnight, they might reached 10 million.

The police, however, disputed Villanueva's claim and said the crowd was concentrated only in front of the Quirino Grandstand.

The Western Police District Tactical Operations center said the crowd reached a peak of only 700,000 at around 7:40 p.m. for 6 p.m., it had already 400,000.

"That's not 1 million. They were sure, but 650,000 because the others have already started going home," said PSE Brainard Ibrahim of the WPD-DTOC.

"They certainly did not reach half. Because 500 have members there," he added.

While the grandstand and the field in front of it was filled by a sea of yellow-clad Villanueva supporters, the portion of Roxas Boulevard cutting across the park was still passable to vehicles.

FPJ's rally

Opposition vice presidential candidate Prospero Pichay Jr. will hold his closing declaration on Saturday.

The standard bearer of the Reformist Nacionalista Pilipino, his running mate Sen. Loren Legarda and their senatorial slate will hold their closing declaration near Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Avenue in Makati City.

For security reasons, President Macapagal-Arroyo will not hold a closing declaration. She will instead show up in the final rallies of local candidates today and tomorrow in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog.

The President's three-month campaign for a full six-year term was supposed to culminate in a grand production at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City on Saturday. Officials were even talking about holding another rally in Manila today.

Speaker Jose de Venecia is earlier disclosed that operators were planning "Hello Garci" bombing attacks in Metro Manila to prevent Ms Macapagal from winning. The President had scrapped a line-up Monsignor Pratyon Lamis organizer because of reported threats against his life. But yesterday, she swung through Bicolgandan and Tarlac.

Unity Mass

Another security concern was the "Unity Mass" to be held on Sunday where the five presidential candidates were supposed to be together in one venue for the first time.

Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin had invited, through former President Corazon Aquino, the five contenders to a Mass for peaceful and credible elections. Ms Macapagal was the first to confirm her attendance at the Mass. Fpje. Sen. Noelle Lacson, former Sen. Raul Roco and Villanueva have also confirmed their attendance.

Lacson said not one person who turned up for Villanueva's meeting in Avalon was paid of a "habal" (small) crowd.

"You can ask them. If they were paid to attend," he said yesterday. "The only thing we paid for was the fee for the permit to hold a rally at the grandstand."

Roco said that even the yellow T-shirts worn by Villanueva's supporters were not provided by their camp, pointing out that the T-shirts were in varying shades of yellow because each group of supporters printed their own.

Indeed, almost all of those present at the grandstand, both young and old, as well as seen and opposite windows, were in yellow T-shirts bearing the name or image of Villanueva. Others were in T-shirts without the name of the preacher, but their shirts were yellow nevertheless. Some were yellow bandanas, while others sported masks bearing Villanueva's face.

Yellow and green streamers and yellow balloons and flags adorned the stage.

Men in yellow "Brother Eddie" T-shirts were selling vehicles to snap and sustaining pedestrians, mostly Villanueva supporters, in crossing Roxas Blvd. and Dewey Boulevard. Others similarly clad men, along with the traffic police, tried to untangle the knot of vehicles which had massed at the intersection of Kalaw Street and Roxas Boulevard.

Beside the stage at the Quirino Grandstand, a barricade was set up for those who wanted to enter the area. One end of the barricade was the entrance, where Villanueva supporters doubted the bags of those coming in, while at the other end was the exit. Everybody used the designated entrance and exit, and nobody complained. Personnel of the SCIPO were seen guarding the area.

Many also said the outing de-crease was a much-awaited event for Villanueva's supporters, who had been asking for a meeting to show their support for the evangelist. He added that among the presidential aspirants, Villanueva is the last to have time to interact the bigger crowds.

"I'd like to see [the other presidential aspirants] hold a rally this big," he said, adding: "And where else there will be so many supporters of Bro. Eddie gather at the Quirino Grandstand, it will be based all the way to Malacañang."

One of the speakers at the rally yesterday was Cebuana Quinn Jr., an ebony comedian. Dalphy who is campaigning for Pier.

The younger Quinn said that when he told his father he was supporting Villanueva, his father declared: "Oh no, [Fernando Poe's nickname] does not win, I hope. Brother Eddie does." Quinn Jr. quoted his father as saying.

All the way from Saudi

One of those in the crowd who made his support for Villanueva known was Dennis Blessing, who came with his family and friends who encouraged him to come so that he could see for himself why Villanueva deserved to be supported.

"I even know some supporters of Bro. Eddie who came home from Riyadh just to vote for him," Blessing said.

Velly, a supporter who hails from Quezon City, said that she came for the duty, love and bond just to go to the rally. "I believe in Bro. Eddie. Even if I'm Catholic, I believe he is the only true leader who will be good for our country. I love the prize in my community believes in him," she said.

Rhodora Caldwell from Makati also came with the city's whole show a Lord (LU) community. The 35, a the group headed by Villanueva, a preacher.

Inspirational

Sen. Vicente Sotto III, Fpje's personal campaign manager, said the actor's meeting de avenue would be an "inspirational rally" and would be bigger than the 2001's proclamation rally in February at the Cuneta Astrodome in Pasay City.

Sotto said the event would be marked by his own testimonial. But he said that Poe's friends in show business would be there.

Sotto said the FPJP had already obtained a permit for the four-hour rally that would start at 4 p.m. "We hope to rally tens of the undecided on our side," he said.

Sotto said Poe would give a speech that would center on his platform of governance.

Opposition plot

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, meanwhile, said the opposition was plotting a campaign of violence if it loses in next week's national election.

He said the alleged plot by opposition activists and retired and active military personnel would start with reports of "massive cheating" on Monday's balloting, followed by power outages blamed on the administration and a walkout by opposition election observers. Both reports from Cynthia D. Balana, Aaric Rebueno and Wael Lim

El Shaddai, too, is for Gloria

Front page 1

The President climbed into the bus at 7:35 p.m., Velarde was seen visible throughout the prayer rally.

Earlier announcement of the El Shaddai endorsement of Ms Macapagal appeared to bolster Sen. Loren Legarda's declaration in Manila that she was the group's vice presidential candidate.

But Sen. Legarda, running mate of actor Fernando Poe Jr., refused to talk that El Shaddai would go for Ms Macapagal.

"I don't think so," she said when asked to comment on talk that El Shaddai would split its endorsement by backing Ms Macapagal for president and herself for vice president.

But she said the sample ballots of El Shaddai and its party-list group, Buhay, were carrying her name as vice presidential candidate.

"Mike Velarde has been my longtime adviser, and I consult him on a lot of things. He's also a close personal friend," she said, adding:

"It could be that there will be no public endorsement, but we have an understanding. Look at the sample ballots of El Shaddai and Buhay."

Again speaking of Velarde, Legarda said: "I thank him for his support, political or otherwise, and the prayers.

"He will admit that I consult him."

Very important rally

The President made a stand about trip for the rally, important prayer rally to the city.

After flying to Boracay to look into the investigation of the massacre early this week of three foreigners and a Filipino in Barangay Balabag, she flew to Lingayen, Pangasinan, to campaign.

She swept through Binmaley, Dagupan, Calasiao, Malasiqui, and other Pangasinan towns on her way to Tarlac.

Ms Macapagal was accompanied by Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr.'s wife Gina, campaign assistant Lupita Kashiwahara and other campaign supporters.

Conscience vote

Legarda called on Filipinos to follow their conscience in the elections.

"I appeal to the Filipino people to follow the dictates of their conscience and not any elite group that sets the stage who hold the future in their hands," she told reporters.

Legarda responded with a "no comment" when asked if the Iglesia ni Cristo endorsement of Ms Macapagal and her running mate Sen. Noli de Castro would be lend to the Poe-Legarda tandem.

"Whatever is their decision, we will respect it. We will continue to treat them as real friends," she said.

Poe himself declined to grant media interviews during the late lunch break of his motorcade around Quezon City.

"There is a reason," he said without elaboration.

Reelected Ang Nagkakaisang Pilipino trustee claimed that the reason for refusal to speak with members of the media had to do with bug-free Chinese restaurant.

'Very huge'

"The food is unbelievable," Legarda said with confidence, referring to the KNP's internal surveys supposedly indicating that the opposition was headed for victory on May 10.

"Very huge" was how Legarda described the KNP's level of confidence.

"From Day One up to the present, we witnessed the overwhelming and enthusiastic response of the people from all walks of life, from different regions in the country," she said, adding:

"We are very optimistic that victory is in hand. It's not only a victory of FPJ-Loren but a victory of the people."

Legarda said she also enjoyed the "national support of business, labor and progressive party list groups."

"They recognize my brand of unifying leadership. That's very important," she said.

Padilla name missing . . .

Front page 1

released by the Commission on Elections in several areas of the country.

"This is worse than display-basic [anti-padding cheating]," lamented Padilla, House minority leader and long-time main of broadcast opposition presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Padilla and field supporters, finding out that his name was not on the Comelec list, issued a press like Eamon Samar, Bilran and Bacolod City, had promptly reported the matter to the police.

"This is a grievous error that should be immediately corrected," he demanded of the poll body, especially fearful that the deletion of his name might not be limited to the three areas.

Already, he said, he has asked his field campaigners to "check and recheck" the official candidates' list per precinct. The Comelec list checked by the Inquirer showed Padilla's name at No. 36. He was listed as an independent.

Padilla insisted that, all things being equal, he is sure to land in the winning circle of 12 senators. Based on the assessment of independent analysts, he said, his victory would be delivered by multi-sectoral groups and multi-partisan political blocs, including several people's organizations, nongovernmental organizations, militant religious and lay church groups, as well as voters from the so-called "Solid North."

He said several of his colleagues from the 8th to the 11th Congress had likewise pledged their support.

"But if your name is not on that list, not a single vote will be credited to you," he pointed out. The Comelec should prepare the corrected list with "extra caution" and release it as soon as possible, he said.

Addressing the poll body, Padilla pleaded his case in behalf of other possible victims of the oversight. "The official list is a matter of life and death for candidates. Those whose names are not on it are goners." With a report from Marlon P. Manlit

Picasso sells for record $104M

Front page A1

Sotheby's did not say who bought "Boy with a Pipe."

A 20-year-old Picasso painted "Boy with a Pipe" soon after settling in Montmartre, France. It depicts a young Parisian boy holding a pipe in his left hand and wearing a garland of flowers. John Hay and Betsey Whitney bought the painting in 1950 for $30,000.

Rose Period

Sotheby's called the work, which had a private estimate of $70 million, "one of the most beautiful of the artist's Rose Period paintings and one of the most important early works by Pablo Picasso ever to appear on the market."

The previous highest-selling Picasso piece was "Woman with Cassard Hat," a blue period painting done in 1901 and 1902, which sold for more than $55 million in November 2000 at Christie's. It was the fifth highest auction price paid for a work of art.

PAINTED in 1905, this Picasso painting now holds the record of being the most expensive ever sold at auction. AFP/File

"Boy with a Pipe" was part of a collection of major works by Picasso, Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas and others that headlined an auction of 39 paintings from a charitable foundation created by Betsey Whitney, a philanthropist, Sotheby's said.

Also on the auction block was "Contrast au Bois de Boulogne," by Manet. Painted in 1873, it depicts a scenery shot at the horse races and features a top-hatted figure in the lower right corner that is thought to be Manet's 11-year-old nephew Jacques Guillemet, Sotheby's said.

It sold for $26.3 million.

Media lord

The collection, which had a presale estimate of more than $140 million, netted $155 million. The proceeds will go to the Greentree Foundation—created in 1982 by Betsey Whitney following the death of her husband.

John Hay Whitney was editor in chief and publisher of The New York Herald Tribune from 1961-1966 and chair of the International Herald Tribune from 1966 until his death. He also founded the venture capital firm of J.H. Whitney and Co. Betsey Whitney died in 1988. AP

MANIFESTO:

SONNY OSMEÑA DOES NOT DESERVE THE SUPPORT OF THE CEBUANOS/BISAYA

Don Sergio Osmeña and Serging Osmeña were among the most admired and respected leaders from Cebu. Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Senator Sergio Osmeña carries on their legacy of devoted and selfless public service.

But another Osmeña had disgraced the family name and brought untold embarrassment to Cebu.

John Henry Osmeña (alias Sonny) addresses the Cebuano electorate as **"Haring Lungaod."** But after the elections he treats himself as **"Hari sa Lungsod,"** insulting, harassing and oppressing anyone who blocks his quest for wealth and power.

Many individuals, institutions and groups have experienced Sonny Osmeña's legendary vindictiveness. Even the University of the Philippines is not spared, just because he dislikes its President who happens to be a fellow Cebuano. Sonny Osmeña cut UP's budget by over P114 Million Pesos.

During the Davide impeachment, Sonny Osmeña again sided with the Pro impeachment block against a highly respected Cebuano/Bisaya Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr.

After the 1998 elections, he told the Cebuanos "Magpuasa kamo." You go hungry because Erap, my candidate, lost badly in the province. True to his word, Sonny Osmeña as chairperson of the Senate Finance Committee denied funding of development projects in Cebu, including cutting the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) shares of all Local Government Unit (LGU) in the Philippines by P5 Billion in 1999, P15 Billion in 2000 and P15 Billion in 2001.

He is now repackaging his tattered image. But his new image as "John O." cannot hide his real character as a treacherous and perverted politician.

John Henry Osmeña (alias Sonny, alias John O) does not deserve the support of the Cebuanos, Bisaya and the Filipino people.

CONCERNED CEBUANOS/BISAYA

It's official: INC voting for GMA

Front page A1

its choices for presidency and vice president, respectively.

The statement said INC Executive Minister Eraño "Ka Erdy" Manalo "made the final decision after consultations with the members of the church council, the ministry and other worthy names and reflection."

Mr. Bitanajan confirmed yesterday that she had secured the INC endorsement.

"I asked for their help and I believe they gave it to me, and I am thankful. The solid supporters during a campaign needs to be there to, Pangasinan.

She added that the INC endorsement was an endorsement of her platforms.

"In the positions of whether she had been given the name by the El Shaddai charismatic group, she said: "Maybe. We will no longer because tonight is their prayer rally [in Tarlac] and I am going there." [See story on Page A2.]

Nurse on sample ballot

Asked over GMA-7's early evening newscast how sure she was that she had been endorsed by the INC, Ms Macapagal said her name was on its sample ballot.

The INC, supposedly with at least 2 million members of voting age, is said to vote as a bloc for whomever its leaders endorse.

Defensor said it was only on Wednesday that Executive Minister Eduardo Manalo informed the members to expect to receive sample ballots for their national and local slates in their houses.

The announcement was preceded by a homily mainly describing the virtues of a united vote on May 10.

Citing biblical verses, the minister urged worshippers to trust in the INC leadership. He said acting as one body glorified God because it was in accordance with His will.

"Do all things without murmuring and arguing," he said to Filipinos, quoting St. Paul's epistle to the Philippians. "Fulfill my joy to being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

According to the minister, the INC is like a human body whose head is Christ and whose two feet cannot take steps in separate directions.

He said the INC leadership's call for a united vote was not a means of "coercion" but of "persuasion" based on doctrines that members embraced when they agreed to be baptized in the faith.

40-percent share of votes

Defensor said the Macapagal would shoot for a 40-percent share of the votes, or two percentage points higher than Estrada's record 38-percent share.

"We need a majority vote to accomplish a strong mandate for the President—peace, stability and economic growth," he said.

He pointed out that the President's efforts to seek reconciliation and guidance from INC leaders had paid off. "She has learned to listen [to] their views and followed this advice," he said, adding that not over the past three years, and I believe that this has given her more weight in the eyes of the INC leadership."

Defensor denied that the INC—which is known to pick odds on favorites in the polls—picked Mr. Macapagal because of her "winnability" as shown by her strong showing in the surveys.

"It's not the survey alone that is important. What is important is how the INC, from its smallest member to its highest leaders, views the President," he said.

The Estrada question

Defensor also said Mr. Macapagal's humane treatment of Estrada was an offshoot of Manalo's counsel that she "reach out and unify the people" and "heal the wounds" brought about by Edsa II and EC.

"When we speak of unifying the country, we have to address the Estrada question," Defensor said.

But he stressed that in securing the INC vote, Mr. Macapagal did not cut any deals with the INC regarding Estrada, who is now in detention more closely after he was moved in January 2004.

Defensor also said it would be inaccurate to say that Ms Macapagal was chosen mainly because of her policy record she caused President.

"I believe more moral issues [considered] by the INC leaders in choosing their bet," he said.

Ms Macapagal had met with Manalo six times since she became President in January 2001, according to Defensor.

Defensor also said Ms Macapagal had formally informed the INC leadership of her decision to run for President, and had asked for support.

She went to the sprawling INC compound in Quezon City two months ago but it was Manalo's son, Edwardo, the deputy executive minister, who received her.

The last time she saw Manalo was four years ago when Defensor she visited the reclusive minister in the hospital inside the INC compound, Defensor said.

The President was to have called on Manalo on Monday morning but the appointment did not push through.

Rejoicing early on

INC Manalonians had reason to rejoice early on.

On Wednesday, a Pelaez source in Pangasinan said a meeting of a high official of the INC spoke by phone with Ms Macapagal last Saturday and told her: "We will support you."

The President was "very happy" after the call, the source said.

Tonight for confirmation on that day, Defensor, who also serves as the President's liaison to the INC, said: "We are waiting for the distribution of the sample ballots by the INC members[.]."

On Tuesday, a Palace operative launched the first campaign ad for INC sample ballot showing that Ms Macapagal and Dr Gatlin had tagged the reserved "assistances."

The copy of the sample ballot earned the dare reassurings specified by the INC guidelines.

A report of Malaya's Belen, the one read at yesterday's worship service endorsing the INC members to again be of "one mind and judgment" when they vote on Monday, was also furnished the bureau, along with a copy of a document containing the INC's guidelines on how it would deliver its vote.

Among the guidelines were an injunction to INC leaders to remind members to go to polling centers early to ensure that they would be able to vote.

According to the document, **multiple ballots will be issued one house** to house starting May 7 up to the eve of the election, and members will be made to sign on receipt.

'Sure winner'

Gwen Teddy Gatlin, secretary general and second nominee of the military party-list group Bagong Mosos, said on Monday that Ms Macapagal would be the "sure winner" if the INC endorsement pushes through.

"The INC has a pragmatic pick of candidate for president. That's their vote, they have the right to choose," Gatlin said. "I think it would help them," Gatlin said in Isabela.

He added: "They picked Fidel Ramos in 1998 and he won. Now if the INC will finally go for GMA, she will be a sure winner."

Gatlin said even Bayan Muna's party-list candidates had been sensing the INC and the El Shaddai for their endorsements, "but not actively pursuing their votes."

"If they want to support us, we will be very grateful to them," he said. "We are [hoping] to be chosen, but as for the endorsement, Ayaw namin sa may tapalit. That is not our practice." Bilik a report from Hillamar Mayor Jr., PM Jim three Lucero Barrios

Chinoy upstart threatens to end Zamboanga dynasty

Front page A1

ing to reporters gathered at his late mother's sprawling house. "There's a lot of people subscribing to this election, it's incredible."

The target of his ire is Lobregat, first candidate Wee Gee Ong (also known as Ja Ping Wee), a rags-to-riches ethnic Chinese businessman who Lobregat says is trying to buy the city's 450 votes by offering cellular and floating poll votes.

There are whispers from Lobregat's camp that Wee's money comes from illegal drugs and not just from the small business empire he has built on selling seaweed extract.

Wee, a naturalized 70-year-old whom campaign bills describe as "A Man of Action," is a former point man of deposed President Joseph Estrada in the city and government remembers the negotiations for the release of Estrada and Malacañang hostage held by the Abu Sayyaf.

He fought off the allegations as "black propaganda" from a family that mastered money politics long ago.

Welcome to Philippine elections at the local level.

Colorful characters

The focus may be on the race for the presidency, but the elections that most directly affect the average Filipino will be fought furiously by 16,000 or so candidates seeking the jobs of mayor, governor and councilor.

There is no shortage of colorful characters, and allegations of cheating are par for the course, tying before getting dirty.

Besides the winner-of-Western-style democracy families who have battled over near-sheer Spanish colonial times dominate the process, money flows into places it shouldn't and the allegations "black propaganda" dismiss and politics like sarsuela.

Into the Maremens in the Basco Storm to the Ormoñas of Cebu and the Muslim royal clans in Mindanao, hundreds of wealthy families keep a grip on local power, helping to secure their business interests from the capitol of politics.

The Zamboanga race for president could their support.

"They say politics is all local," Lobregat, 56 and a member of Congress for six years, told Reuters in a ripped Tagalog that mixed English background.

"Most of the time it would be the national candidates who would send the push from the local candidates," he said. A day later, Lobregat ended any doubt over his loyalties by posing for pictures with visiting Pimp was Fernando Poe Jr., who is trying to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Mistrials lives on

Weeks Days Lobregat, who died in January at 82, was a classic machine politician in a well-off life. A picture of her summerly figure posts out from behind her son on campaign posters, just in case the

Front page A1

only's 500,000 residents forget her.

"Nothing is handed down, for me, it's not a dynasty, it's a legacy," Cobo said.

Even Mayor Clara's fiercest skills to to bring home the bacon from Manila in the form of development projects has not been enough to fill more people out of poverty.

Stained by Muslim-on-Christian violence which embroiled the city during the many Moro island strongholds of the Abu Sayyaf kidnap group, Zamboanga is too scary for most investors or tourists.

Beautiful beach but empty

Now the city a beach of pink sand it is empty as it is beautiful. Beggars roam the roads. On one warm morning, a young boy was sprawled face down on the dusty main avenue.

Wee says he knows all about poverty.

At the plush house, he hands out five volumes of news clippings about him and his thoughts, together with a moving account of his life—a rare tale of Philippine social mobility.

From humble beginnings selling ice drops and cold, it says, the son of Chinese immigrants rose to become the city's pro-eminent businessman by tapping the potential of seaweed.

His links with Malaysian business men are viewed with suspicion by Lobregat, who says Wee's campaign is financed by foreigners.

"The Lobregats don't want to return to rural is," Wee said. "If I'm the mayor, I'll go to Malaysia to invite them to come in so we'll have no problem with employment here."

Colonial mentality

Wee's campaign slogan—"It's time for a change"—would seem to have appeal given Zamboanga's deep problems.

But poverty has yet to translate into fundamental political change in Zamboanga City or in the national level.

Some call it a colonial mentality—a hangover from three centuries of Spanish rule, half a century of American domination and a few years of Japanese occupation.

"We took hundreds of years to get where we are now," said a Western diplomat in Manila, referring to his country. "We can't expect the Philippines to get there overnight."

Out in the streets of Zamboanga, where people still speak Chabacano, a mixture of Spanish and regional languages, the Lobregats are widely regarded as natural rulers.

Nearest the kitchen

"We don't mind the family thing because we know first and their quirks," said Roger Gamayan, a 36-year-old who works for a taxi firm. "His mother died a bit for us." Gamayan said he was offered cash to vote for a certain candidate last election and fully expected to get bribed again.

"That's just the way politics is here," he said. Reuters

Lacson: No intention of coming back with his body on his shield

Front page A1

Lacson hugged her by the neck.

Soon the rush swallowed him.

"That's the reason I am not going up [on] for the presidency[,]" he said. A reunion doesn't give up the fight. "We prepared for as long for this ... and we are pretty confident."

'Like an atom bomb'

The elections only a week away, Lacson and his candidates Senator Ro Pue Jr. were under screaming pressure to unite and stave off opposition efforts at the polls.

"I am not able to unite them, it's going to come like an atom bomb," said Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, to Lacson, a Lacson ally in, echoed in the audience take.

But the pace more devide soon, Lacson said, adding: "I don't believe we give it more than a couple of days."

Divided loyalties

Residents in two other Metro Manila areas than Lacson have, dominated on Monday were clearly hostile to Presidente Macapagal-Arroyo. But they were also divided on who between Pue and Lacson should give way to boost opposition chances.

"Kailangan magkisa ala, ilang beses na ba nangyari ala parehe na kinginan? Pero here to unite si dary will hold real up in the rallings parehi," said Bay Aglayan, 46, a department on Road 7, West Crame.

Many in that San Juan neighborhood remain loyal in in former mayor and the second President Joseph Estrada, and clearly lean toward Erap.

But the area is also peopled by former policemen who had been impressed by Lacson's strong work ethic during method in Ping-ong Ichsay, pagdidisiplina niya at PNP. Pag hinge they will unite. If Ping loses the country, he will give way to FPJ."

Duenos was unsympathetic.

"Kung magkaisa sila, kaalala sa 2010. Pag nanalo si FPJ, kasalanan ni Lacson. If? Any-ways, it will be a matter of time. If FPJ loses, it will be Lacson's fault."

A dear son

Other people manning a sidewalk cubicle used by Pue supporters on headquarters said they were crippled by the rain, despite believing the actor had better chances of beating Mr. Macapagal, they switched allegiance.

Regardless of their loyalties, residents of Block 7 in Addition Hills were united in praising Pue for a decision not running home.

"Pue na ayu (He's here)!" a man shouted.

"Gaspi talaga (He's really handsome)," a woman gushed as Lacson appeared, wearing a raincoat a khaki and shirt.

People assembled out of their hovels to greet. Children unveiled one their hands. Pious, on pressed their bodies close to him.

The man is not raised a cheering hero.

On a stage installed at the edge of a basketball court, a woman barker hailed Lacson as the man who would "save our President Estrada."

Public coordinator Bella Montecinos, taking over, tantrued the moment to the crowd.

"Sino ang nagpasabing si Ping Lacson ay bobo.... Ang mga hindi niyo nagpaghgaan. Bobo is noting that Ping Lacson is gay? Those who've followed him closely know that he did not yield to it?" Montecinos shouted.

The crowd, now swollen to about 300, howled.

Seeing his boss swooning, an aide slipped Att hand into a side pocket, found a blue tissue and handed it to Lacson, who used it to wipe the sweat off his face.

Recurring reminder

The men circling among the women worked up the stage boss, Lacson had his hands full signaling Cabuya, paper fans, shoulder bags, and clutches.

One mother lifted her baby to Lacson's face. He signed the child's forehead.

Linda Dorellano, 17, was more audacious. She motioned something to Lacson and he broke into laughter.

What did she tell him?

"Sabi ko dito siya mag-sign sa dibdib ko (I told him to write his name across my breast)[,]" the maid with a respectful mouth. "Sa panahon nya sya lang (In his time)."

It was one wish that Lacson did not oblige. He signed Linda's shirt, all right, but remarked his name on its lower part, safely away from her breasts.

Hard day's night

In the town voting kiss to his late appointment, Lacson insisted about the day was ending.

"I always look forward in the evening because that is the end of the day and I'll be with my son," he said. "But this morning also looking forward to the next day."

Some candidates resort at the thought of having to struggle through another day on the road, another day of scolding hair, another day of rallies and speeches, which are the same things you said on the first day of the campaign, 85 days ago.

"Your adrenaline isn't pumping, your mouth is low, and it seems like it's going to be a long, long day," Lacson said. "But as you go on, you are encouraged by signs of support, not only enthusiastic support but very intense support. People are listening to our speeches, people are gathering around us. And that's a typical day in our campaign."

Trojan horse

Lacson has very clear ideas about how he will rule this fragmented country of 85 million people. Ramp out corruption, turn insurgents into peace talks rebel groups—except the Abu Sayyaf—or coalition they respect Philippine sovereignty and abandon their goal of overthrowing the government.

There will be no talks with the Abu Sayyaf. They should either be killed or captured in battle, forced to surrender or convinced that kidnapping and beheading people are not Islam's way. In Lacson's words: "They should be erased from the surface of the earth."

But, he would use an iron fist to govern but only to crush the temps and corrupt bureaucracy into shape—"no matter who gets hurt"—and not curb civil liberties.

It may sound Machiavellian but that is the only way to get the government running efficiently, if one is a leader, he said.

Set an example and exact obedience, inquire how if you cannot

Front page A1

inspire love.

He denied allegations that he is a Trojan horse embedded in the opposition ranks by Malacañang to divide them by not uniting with Pue.

In exchange, or the talk goes, the number charges he is facing over the 1989 alleged release of seven wealthy kidnapped would be dropped.

Warrior's destiny

"Any supposed or hoops or Malacañang (Malacañang is the seat running him up)," an opponent from Lacson's camp said.

Lacson dismissed the allegations as pure rumor. "I'm not withdrawing, simply because I know I am given this country well," he said. "I can see the anxiety from further down running."

And he will not be beholden to Filipino-Chinese businessmen bankrolling his campaign. They were helping him because of his success in unsettling kidnap gangs preying on rich Filipino-Chinese families, he said.

"Bayad na sila (They have been paid)," Lacson said.

He believes in destiny but isn't quite sure if being president is his destiny.

"If it's not meant to be, then I shouldn't be prepared to accept my fate. I won't be frustrated that much if I don't make it simply because I've prepared myself that, per hapo, that is God's will."

And if that is how it will turn out in the end, then Basilio Lacson, code-name "1", the man to rub elbow the soldier from Intac, Cavite, the senator, the man who would be President will be coming home—like the Greek warriors of old—lying on his shield, after all.

Cops told: Enforce liquor ban strictly

NATIONAL Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Edgardo de Leon yesterday ordered all police units in Metro Manila to strictly implement the liquor ban on Election Day.

De Leon said the liquor ban is an integral part of the security measures they will impose to prevent election-related violence.

Under the imposed prohibition by the Commission on Elections (Comelec), all persons, including owners and managers of hotels and establishments, are prohibited from selling, furnishing, offering, buying, serving or taking possession of drinks anywhere in the country during 12 midnight of Sunday until 12 midnight of Monday.

Only hotels, restaurants, establishments who have sought exemption through a motion, letter request, petition, or application, filed under oath with the regional election director, remain will be exempted from the ban.

Dino Santos

ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

LAWYERS, COMELEC OFFICIALS, AND CANDIDATES

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Revised 2004 Edition of

COMMENTS ON THE OMNIBUS ELECTION CODE

By: **Ruben E. Agpalo**

The book pinpoints the different stages when and where "Dagdag Bawas" can be committed; it discusses, among others, the factual and legal issues that can arise during canvassing, the requirements of pre-proclamation controversies, as well as the forms required to be accomplished for the purpose; it also discusses post-election disputes, such as election protests, cases involving quo warranto, and prosecution of election offenses. It also new legislations and recent decisions of the Supreme Court on elections. The book will be of assistance to election lawyers, candidates, watchers, and those assigned to safeguard the will of the electorate and the rights of candidates in the counting of votes and in the canvassing of election returns.

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SENATOR AQUILINO Q. PIMENTEL, JR.

Principal author and "Father" of the Local Government Code reports to all barangay officials

Dear Kapitan at mga Kagawad:

As the principal author and "Father" of the Local Government Code, I would like to report on my continuing efforts to enact more development funds (LGUs) and bring more funds and development to your barangay.

From the time the Local Government Code became law in 1992 up to 2004, over 1 TRILLION PESOS had been remitted to all provinces, cities, municipalities and barangays of the Philippines as their statutorily-mandated allotted (IRA) shares. Given particulars, now be termed over-remittance, the Code brought LGUs the following amounts:

Provinces	P203.02 Billion
Cities	P253.02 Billion
Municipalities	P174.04 Billion
40% Barangays	P122.02 Billion

The IRA is where the funding for your roads, bridges, community centers, schools, hospitals and all other LGU projects come from.

For the year 2005 alone, Barangay Antas in Tayabas, Quezon, the smallest barangay in the Philippines, with a population of only 19 people, received an IRA share of P220,228.30 (that is, barangay officials could use for their projects. Barangay 176 in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, the biggest barangay in the country with a population of 105,410 residents received an IRA share of P30,230 MILLION in 2005. Your barangay, which also receives a substantial IRA share, has to behave in these two examples.

Prior to the Local Government Code, the barangays DID NOT HAVE ANY IRA SHARE. Moreover, provinces, cities and municipalities had to beg/lobby/pray for funding which was always lacking in view of their very small IRA shares. This is one of the reasons why I pushed for the passage of the Local Government Code. I wanted to empower LGUs and provide funds so that their projects without begging from central government. MORE ALL BARANGAYS HAVE IRA SHARES FOR THEIR PROJECTS! Moreover, for years, IRA of LGUs were tremendously increased over the years:

YEAR	IRA
1992	32.04 Billion
1993	39.39 Billion
1994	71.94 Billion
1995	80.39 Billion
1996	86.78 Billion
1997	111.71 Billion
2003	121.77 Billion (re-enacted budget)
2003	134.42 Billion
2004	141.30 Billion
2004	161.30 Billion (re-enacted budget)
Supplemental	1,100.12 Billion

Your IRA income should again have increased in 2006. However, this did not happen because the administration did not pass the 2004 budget.

Incidentally, I would also like to mention that the Supreme Court, in a case I filed against the Executive Secretary of then President Fidel V. Ramos, ruled in our favor and declared unconstitutional the practice of Malacañang of withholding/non-release of over 11Bs IRA shares. Today, large sum of taxes stand in contempt of court: the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) must release IRA shares of LGUs within five days after end of every quarter.

Finally, let me mention that I filed SENATE BILL NO. 606, which (1) gives LGUs an increased IRA share of 30% (up from 40%) from all national taxes collected and not just from the internal revenue collected by the Bureau of Internal Revenue. This is projected to increase the present IRA your LGU is receiving by 15%; and (2) entitles barangay officials to retirement benefits and increased insurance coverage from the GSIS.

With your help and should I be re-elected to the Senate in the May elections, I will pursue the passage of these amendatory bills into law in the next Congress.

May I hear your views on how we could further empower LGUs and continue to bring progress to our country.

Maraming salamat po!

NENE PIMENTEL

RE-ELECT SENATOR PIMENTEL AMA NG BARANGAY

METRO
Edna Abelarde S. Monday

Metro bets all set for one final pitch

By Luige del Puerto

SOON, candidates are set to make their final pitch before thousands of supporters and undecided voters today and tomorrow, the last day of the campaign period.

In Bacolod City, opposition mayoral bet Jonny Ferrer and his entire ticket would spend tonight at Dia De. Rizo football field, beside the Marikina River.

Ferrer said it would be a one-night-stand-by-a-river.

"My dream for the city is to have more areas and more jobs. This is my message to residents," he said over the phone.

Continuity

Mayor Bienvenido Lumbao Fernando is expected to uncover the color-coded politicians the next day, at the heart of Batasan, the city's opposite district.

Fernando's message is continuity—not only of Jose Sandoval's grip over the city but also of President Macapagal-Arroyo's build-

over the country.

In Pasig, the Kabayan Team, is an ally of the administration Lakas-Christian and Muslim Democrats.

It is but fitting for the mayor to bring her campaign in the west. Senator Sen. Tamano, a place of hope and despair, symbolizes the city's bid to rid itself of squatters.

Crime rate is high in the district, where the city's anti-narcotics operations are also concentrated.

San Juan

In San Juan, Mayor Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito's campaign culminates with a march parade around the city at 8 a.m., and a huge political caravan at the Greenplaza at 7 p.m.

Ejercito, son of deposed President Joseph Estrada by actress Guia Gomez, has been vigorously campaigning for his vice-mayor, Leonardo "Boy" Zerbo and his councilors.

Zerbo is facing an uphill battle against Philip Cruz, whose friends were raised by the current president, and Councilor Ryan Jo Fernando, a long time ally of the Estrada family.

Ejercito's Medialuna chief, Intoy, told him best, but added what his ending ob-stance at the Pinaglabanan Shrine at 4 p.m.

Bid Lapwai Romeo Recudo, who is running for Congress in Pasig City, already held his closing de-stance on May 1.

"It turned out to be a career decision. There are places to have our picnic to and residents want to hear what we have to say," he said.

Mandaluyong

Mandaluyong Mayor Benjamin "Benhur" Abalos Jr., who is running for Congress, said his ticket would also hold their final caucus rallies on Acacia Lane or Maysilo Street in Barangay Wack-Wack, site of the youngest bases, on Saturday night.

Challenging Abalos is Ernesto "Nitoy" Dacanay, who the son of a former Mandaluyong mayor. His team is expected to hold a caucus rallies today or tomorrow.

VOTE-RICH SITE
Scavengers relax for scraps and leftover food in the Smokey Mountain dump site in Tondo. The site has become a crucial battleground for the vote-seeking candidates in the May 10 elections. —JC

Planas, Defensor trade barbs

Conflict stems from 'substitution of official bets' issue

WITH only two days left before the May 10 elections, the race for legislative in Quezon City's third district heats up as candidates continue to trade barbs.

Mike Planas, who is running under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino slate, is claiming that the substitution of his opponent, Blaise Defensor Jr., as official candidate of the K-4 Coalition is questionable.

Planas questioned Defensor's signatures, which appeared both in his and his daughter, Rep. Blaise Defensor's, Certificates of Candidacy.

But in a statement sent to the Inquirer, Defensor said he submitted his daughter's signature with every requirement there is to legitimize my candidacy. That is why there is no question that I am an official congressional bet in my district. The black propaganda is a desperate move of the Planas camp to hide their own liabilities," Defensor said.

Defensor added that his signature appearing in his daughter's COC is by virtue of a special power of attorney granted him by the congresswoman during her stay in the United States.

But Planas told the Inquirer that the Comelec, through a pronouncement, has already recognized his withdrawal as a candidate after the city council voted before he filed his candidacy for the congressional post. Rina Jimenez, Melodie Tumambing and Mel Leonardo de Guzman

tanong ng Bayan
Bantayan ang balota! Teka, paano nga ba!

Noli accuser an impostor, says lawyer

THE MAN accusing vice presidential candidate Noli "Kabayan" De Castro of pocketing donations for his fictitious nephew is an impostor using the name of the late Dagupan Army to extort money from businessmen in Manila, according to the candidate's lawyer.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, lawyer Jesse Andres said records gathered from the Philippine National Police in Calapan, Mindoro Oriental, revealed that Nilo Bacolo, also a native of Pete Barcelona, was arrested on Nov. 3, 2000 for allegedly trying to extort money from businessman Florentino Silao.

In his complaint dated Nov. 3, 2000, Villar, 44, said Bacolo, pretending to be an NPA member, phoned him on Nov. 2, 2000 and threatened to harm his family if he refuse to pay revolutionary taxes amounting to P150,000. Villar added Bacolo also demanded three sensitive radios from him.

They reported the call to police, which immediately launched an entrapment operation against Bacolo the following day.

Bacolo was released on Nov. 28, 2000 after posting P20,000 bail. His case is still pending.

Militant groups back 5 Senate aspirants

By Tarra Quismundo

AN MILITANT party-list groups yesterday gave their nods and a promise of more than 1 million command votes to five senatorial candidates.

But the groups chose not to rest for any candidate for President and vice president, in view of the opposite for these posts passed what they described as a robust screening process.

Metro Manila chapter of militant party-list groups made up Bayan, Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, Gabriela, Migrante and Suara Bayanihan pledged support to candidates who surpassed their tests of principle and programs.

Among those are K-4 Coalition bets, lawyers Pia Cayetano, actor Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., basketball legend and environmentalist Sen. Robert Jaworski, independent candidates and former Senators Heherson Alvarez and Carlos Padilla who is running under pro-administration Nacionalista Lacson.

The five were picked out of 33 senatorial candidates who had met with the party-list group leaders to explain their platform and stand on issues.

All political aspirants, including the six presidential and four vice presidential candidates, had to measure up to criteria that included having a clear platform, a program on upholding the nation's peace and sovereignty, national personal and political repentance."

"This endorsement is not imposed upon our members. This is based on which are the group picked candidates," said Bayan's Rita Baviera, adding the chosen ones had programs parallel to what the groups are pushing for.

Among these issues are the wage increase, labor health services, protection of women, and good governance.

The groups' endorsements was announced in a press conference yesterday in Manila.

For the party's white they did not name any bets, despite repeated requests from the media that their members would decide for themselves.

Meanwhile, former senator and farmers environment and natural resources secretary said the endorsement was important to an independent candidate.

"This is an affirmation of my platform and stand in 2004 election, that I have been fighting for," said Alvarez, who fought through martial law and served as a senator and Cabinet member.

Pundits see tight mayoralty race in QC

By Tina Santos

MOST political observers believe that the race for the mayoral post in Quezon City would be a neck-and-neck fight between incumbent, who relies on his performance for the past three years, and a veteran politician, who is banking on familiar ID.

Many 10 would see Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte Jr., who is making a second term, battling it out with former three-term mayor Ismael Mathay Jr.

But Belmonte, who had a short stint as a drama speaker and played the role as manager of the presentation panel in the impeachment trial, expressed confidence that his performance and track record will decide the election.

Belmonte, who is running under the administration party Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, takes pride that his administration has significantly improved public health, education and welfare assistance while implementing a number of infrastructure projects, like schools, health centers, connecting roads and creation of public parks.

On the other hand, Mathay, who is running under the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino slate, believes that his being in public service for the past 20 years would make him more familiar to the city's top post, which he held from 1992 to 2001.

"My exposure would be my edge. I know the old as well as the new residents of the city. I know very well what their needs are," Mathay said, adding that the poor condition of the people "being ignored by the current administration" has prompted him to run again.

METROBRIEFS

Wrong target

A B&B who allegedly rose to silence his brother-in-law reluctantly jailed, and killed police instead. Police said the suspect, Fernando Lopez, 41, had a confrontation with Virgilio Natanawa, his brother-in-law, around 10:30 p.m. Wednesday at their house in Caloocan City. Fernando allegedly drew a revolver and shot Virgilio but missed. The bullet instead hit the chest of his sister, Bautista, 38, who was then lying in bed. Bautista died on the way to the hospital. Fernando was arrested by police after he allegedly attempted to escape. The suspect fled. —Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

Bagong Tao rally

THE BAYANG Tao Movement (BTM), a party-list group competing in the May 10 elections, will hold its rallying de mayoral on 5 p.m. today at the democratic Bonifacio in Quezon City. The BTM is a coalition of the Tribalistas Youth Movement, Alay Sa Tinubdan (Elders Organization), Lawyers against Monopoly and Poverty (LAMP) and other people's organizations in the country. The party-list group believes that people need to change their basic attitudes, beliefs and vision first before there can be lasting changes in government and society.

Editor killed

AN EDITOR of the newspaper Mindanao Mail in Davao City was killed by a speeding passenger bus Tuesday night in Quezon City, a police report said. The victim, Carmelita Moreno, 58, who worked as lay-out man, died instantly after he was hit by a speeding passenger bus. The bus driver, Gilbert San Pascual, 29, immediately surrendered to authorities. Tina Santos

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS OF SPI TECHNOLOGIES, INC.

All shareholders of SPI Technologies, Inc. ("SPI") are hereby notified that on April 29, 2004, the Securities and Exchange Commission ("SEC") approved **THLPW ACQUISITION, L.P.** 's ("the Bidder") request for an extension of the period for the Tender Offer of SPI Shares ("Shares"). Please note the following modifications:

	Original	Extension
Tender Offer Period	9:00 a.m. of April 13, 2004 to 3:00 p.m. of May 7, 2004	9:00 a.m. of April 12, 2004 to 3:00 p.m. of May 14, 2004
Cross Date	May 28, 2004	May 28, 2004
Payment Date	after 3:00 p.m. on May 20, 2004	after 3:00 p.m. on May 28, 2004

Pursuant to SRC Rule 19 (Tender Offer), which imposes only one closing and completion of a tender offer, please note that even those who have tendered their SPI Shares during the original Tender Offer Period shall be paid after 3:00 p.m. on May 28, 2004.

As of May 4, 2004, Shares committed to be sold and tendered to ATR-Kim Eng Securities, Inc. (the "Depository") total 268,263,477 Shares, or approximately 85% of SPI's issued and outstanding Shares.

All other Terms of the Tender Offer shall remain the same.

For further inquiries, please contact **Pilden Martinez Flores San Pedro & Loanko** at (63-2) 867-4006 or **Ms. Rhoda Enriquez** of the Depository at (63-2) 849-8888.

Romulo gets Salonga nod for Congress bid

By Luige del Puerto

IF POLITICS is addition, then it has been a good week for lawyer Romeo Romulo, who is running for Congress in Pasig City.

Days after the Liberal Party adopted him as its bet, former Senate President Jovito Salonga endorsed Romulo, saying the lawyer has the "competencies and the moral integrity to represent the city in Congress."

Salonga is himself a former Pasig congressman. He was with Romulo's father, Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo, in the Senate. He voted against the extension of the US bases in the Philippines; Romulo voted for it.

"Why I am supporting Romulo? Because he is the future ... I see these characteristics in him —competence, moral integrity and sincerity to serve the poor," Salonga said in a letter faxed to the Inquirer.

Romulo was recently in the news when he filed a "Tender" lawsuit against the administration of Pasig Mayor Soledad de Leon.

Jaworski, the official congressional candidate of Lakas-Christian and Muslim Democrats, claimed Romulo got 30,000 Medilaw cards, the controversial health program of the administration.

He said Romulo's camp allegedly obtained the cards through his father, the Executive Secretary.

Romulo countered that his camp has merely referred people to the "appropriate agencies" like the Office of the President, but has never personally distributed the cards himself.

BUSINESS

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Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

Bangko Sentral keeps key policy rates steady

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas yesterday kept its overnight policy rates steady for the 30th straight month despite the higher-than-expected inflation rate in April.

The move did not come as a surprise as the lowest appreciation of the peso vs the $1-$1 trend—after falling to historic lows in late March—was expected to help temper consumer price increases in the months ahead.

The BSP's policy-making Monetary Board, in its monthly policy-cum-setting meeting yesterday, maintained its rates at 6.5% percent for overnight borrowings and 9 percent for overnight lending.

The policy rates were last adjusted in July last year, when they were reduced by 25 basis points.

The country's annual inflation rate, based on the 1994 base of the National Statistics Office, rose to 4.1 in April from 3.6 percent in March.

In a statement yesterday, BSP officials in charge Alberto Reyes said the inflationary pressures in April were expected to be temporary.

"These factors are not likely to pose a significant influence on inflation in the long run," Reyes said.

"Monetary authorities believe that the long-term inflation will continue to be well contained," he said.

"We had expected inflation in April to end high because of temporary increase in demand, mainly due to the May 10 elections and because of the peso's depreciation," said ATR-Kim Eng Securities economist Lee Ferreras.

While domestic demand was likely to remain strong in May, Lorenzo said it would likely not weaken by June.

She said that the rising international commodity prices, particularly that of crude oil, had added pressure on the inflation.

"The main culprit here is China, whose economy has been expanding at breakneck pace. A move by the Chinese government to slow growth may have a calming effect on fuel and other commodity prices," Lorenzo said.

The government aims to keep inflation within a range of 4-5 percent this year.

Peso bits 4-mo high

THE PESO yesterday hit a new four-month high of 55.10 before tumbling to 55.45 to $1, as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas published up dollars at the spot market to take advantage of strong inflows.

The peso opened strong at 55.40 but weakened to an intraday low of 55.69 before closing at 55.60 to $1. Turnover in yesterday's trade amounted to $246 million.

The peso lost 35 centavos yesterday at the Philippine Dealing System from Wednesday's closing of 55.40 to $1.

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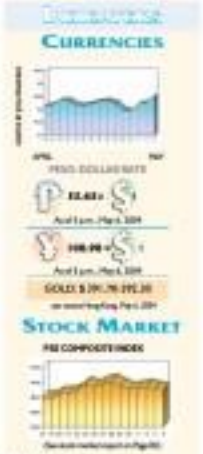

Stocks drop ahead of polls

STOCKS yesterday ended lower, led by the 3 phone firms Globe Telecom Inc., as players hesitated to profit ahead of a long weekend for national elections on May 10.

The main index dropped 0.91 percent, or 30.44 points, to 3,313.80 points. The market is up more than 7 percent this year.

Globe Telecom, jointly owned by Ayala Corp. and Singapore Telecommunications, lost 2.08 percent, or P25, to P819. Turnover set for 30 percent of total trade.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (Meralco) dropped 1.49 percent, or 60 centavos, to P53.

"Investors are just cautious ahead of the elections," said Eagle Equities President Jose Hizon.

Value turnover rose to P800.44 million from Wednesday's P628.22 million.

Losers (red) gained 23 to 11 and 38 stocks were unchanged. Reuters

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RP, ADB to pursue $200-M swap deal

By Michelle V. Rafer

THE PHILIPPINE government and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have agreed to thresh out their differences and push through with the delayed $200-million currency swap deal.

According to a finance official, the ADB and the government were willing to come to the negotiating table with better offers such that a deal was expected to be signed in a month's time.

The facility, approved last January, seeks to provide long-term peso-denominated loans to selected banks for on-lending to businesses that earn revenue in pesos.

The ADB will raise the funds for the facility by swapping convertible currencies such as US dollars for pesos with the Philippine government.

"Now, there has been a meeting of minds in terms of pricing," said the finance official privy to the negotiations.

Although representatives of both parties were set to schedule a meeting to discuss the specific improvements in their price offer, the official said they agreed to forge a deal soon after the May 10 general elections.

Talks over the currency swap deal were stalled due to pricing issues.

One of these was the government's stand that the ADB set the swap rates at below-market level.

The government claimed that the ADB could afford to give low rates as it can source funds abroad at a lower cost.

The dollars that the Philippine government will generate from the deal will be used to either strengthen its dollar reserves or pay off maturing foreign obligations.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

CURRENCIES

Machinery import duties slashed

By Rocnel W. Domingo

MALACAÑANG has ordered the reduction in import duties slapped on capital equipment, spare parts and consumer items from a maximum of 10 percent to 1 percent.

The reduction provided under Executive Order No. 313 was expected to encourage local firms to invest in capital equipment needed to spur industry and the economy.

Signed last May 3, EO 313 covers machinery and parts imported by new and expanding enterprises registered with the Board of Investments, save for those covered under the motor vehicle development program.

Imported equipment, parts and accessories qualified for decreased duties under EO 313 include those that:

- are not manufactured locally in sufficient quantity of comparable quality and are at reasonable prices;
- are reasonably needed and would be used exclusively by the enterprise in its registered activity, unless there is prior approval from the BOI for other uses or the proportion or terms are paid, if the equipment are used for non-registered activities;
- are approved for importation by the BOI.

The order also states that the registered enterprise could not sell, transfer or dispose of the equipment without the approval of the BOI within five years from importation.

If this is violated, both the seller and the buyer would pay/owe the amount of the duty exemptions.

The order also tasked the BOI to coordinate with the Department of Finance, National Economic and Development Authority and the Bureau of Customs in promulgating the implementing rules of EO 313.

Last month, BOI officers in charge Glenn Ong-undes and companies that rely heavily on machinery/equipment have been clamoring for the restoration of exemptions on taxes and duties.

Practically all BOI-registered companies are applying for the restoration of incentives on capital equipment, Fernandez said.

Metro Assembly Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima had urged such firms to modernize and bring in capital equipment to remain competitive in the Southeast Asian market.

"Some of our industrial firms are inefficient because their machinery are outmoded," he said. "Dapat ma-encourage sila para sila mag-invest (As incentive of Southeast Asian National Free Trade Area comes in full force in a few years)."

Purisima said all Asean countries, except Singapore and the Philippines, grant tax and duty exemptions on imported capital.

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100,000 - 250,000	5.25	5.50	5.50	5.50	6.50
250,000 - 499,999	5.50	5.75	5.75	6.00	7.00
500,000 - 999,999	6.00	6.25	6.50	6.50	8.00
1,000,000 - 4,999,999	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	8.00
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PLDT 75
PLDT BUSINESS

PCA seeks aid to tap P1.2B from coco levy fund

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES Coconut Authority will seek the assistance of the Presidential Commission on Good Government and the Coconut Industry Investment Fund to tap into the P1.2-bil. lion dividend earnings from the shares of stocks in San Miguel Corp., which were acquired using the coconut levy fund.

"The PCA and the PCGG have nominated that some 27 percent of equity shares in San Miguel were obtained through the use of coco levy funds paid for by coco 1.2 million coconut farmers since the 1970s.

PCA Administrator Danilo Concepcion on Wednesday said that the dividend earnings could be more than P1.2 billion as the participation share of SMC have also increased this year.

"We need the funds to increase the yield of coconut farms that today's decline by 25 percent over the next three years," said Concepcion. "The earnings will be used to partially finance the fertilization process of some 750,000 hectares of farmlands."

Biological law states has been affecting the nearly coconut farms, threatening to cut down production by 15 percent every three years.

The proposed fertilization program would actually require some P4 to P5 billion in funds.

Concepcion said that the PCA is also looking for sources to fund inter-cropping program in coconut farms so that farmers would have to be wealthy P40 billion.

There have been eight cases involving the coco levy fund filed before the Sandiganbayan since 1997.

The coconut farmers are now urging the Sandiganbayan to resolve the cases concerning the final distribution of the coco levy collections to be worth P40 billion.

The Coconut Industry Reform Movement Inc. (CORI) said that the Sandiganbayan should now make a summary judgment on the ownership of the sequestered San Miguel Corp. shares and the various Coconut Industry Investment Fund (CIIF) oil mills before the conduct of the national elections.

"We don't want politics to again intervene with the coco levy cases," said Joey Sarmiento, CORI executive director. "We nearly lost our case during the Estrada administration."

Globe claims 740,000 new subscriptions in Mar., Apr.

By Clarissa S. Batino

GLOBE Telecom Inc. yesterday said it had acquired in March and April 740,000 new subscribers to its network, adding hopes that the company would swiftly recover from the first quarter setback when 1.9 million Globe customers reportedly turned to its competitors.

Delayed reaction to the competition's marketing campaign and technical subscribers to switch, the officials admitted.

As of April, Globe's subscribers stood at about 9.5 million from 9.1 million by the end of the first quarter.

Globe president Gerardo Ablaza Jr. told an investors' briefing yesterday that for March and April alone, 370,000 subscribers were added to their network each month.

"I hope that the worst is over and that we could sustain the trend of increased uptake in subscriber base seen in March and April," Ablaza told reporters.

From a peak of about 7 percent in February, Globe's churn rate—the percentage of subscribers disconnecting from the system—had dropped to 4.2 percent in April, according to the Globe president.

"About 70 percent of the total churn rate for 2003 in the first two months of the year," Ablaza said. "But the rate is down by April."

Globe said the high churn level reflected the subscribers who left its network from June to October last year when its rival, Smart Communications Inc., came up with the over-the-air reloading system, and the free swapping of SIM cards.

Smart, with about 14.4 million subscribers as of mid-March, launched the e-Load and then SIM swap for the first half of 2003. Globe caught up with its Auto Load in late 2003 and the SIM swap early this year.

"It is difficult to quantify the impact of the competition in our revenues," said Delfin Gonzalez Jr., Globe chief finance officer. "But we would like to point out that our revenues increased faster in the first quarters compared to the last quarter of 2003."

Globe, which accounts for 48 percent of the profitable mobile phone market, posted a net income of P5.1 billion or 51 percent from about P2 billion a year ago. Revenues went up by 16 percent to P22.8 billion.

"Earnings per share increased to P21.50, 66 percent higher than the P13.00 posted in the same period in 2003, which also reflects lower shares outstanding following the 12 million share buyback last last year," the company said in a statement.

Communication, perseverance, success

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

COMMENTARY

OUR FARMERS and fisherfolk have succeeded in running a million farmers in agriculture development. They had dreamed of a time when, instead of suspending negotiations with agricultural programs—whose the farmers were never consulted—they would be the ones to formulate their own proposals for the politicians to consider. If this were to happen, the paradigm for farmers and fisherfolk would change from dependence to empowerment.

Over the last fifteen months, the Alyansa Agribukuran managed to do just that. Being the largest coalition of farmers and fisherfolk with 30 national and local federations and organizations, the Alyansa conducted nationwide consultations on a proposed presidential agricultural agenda for over a year. The two-part agenda was sent to each presidential candidate in late February before the campaign period began.

The first part is the overall agenda which includes support for agriculture, the international trade regime, and agrarian reform, the rights of women and indigenous peoples, and governance. The second part is the commodities agenda which deals with the most important issues concerning each commodity sector. These sectors are rice, corn, sugar, fruits and vegetables, fisheries, livestock, and poultry.

Communication

The communication that ensued during these nationwide consultations was both open and constructive.

There were of course differences among the farmers and fisherfolk, but knowing that it was high time for them to form a strong and united front like the groups formed in other countries like Taiwan, Japan, the United States and the European Union, the farmers and fisherfolk chose to build on each other's suggestions instead of focusing on their disagreements.

Because of this, what emerged was a comprehensive agriculture agenda that had the unanimous consent of all stakeholders.

Areas where differences were irreconcilable (e.g., genetically modified organisms or GMOs) were left out of the agenda. In these areas, it was agreed that each organization could still pursue its own advocacy work, but this would be done outside the Alyansa framework.

Perseverance

Within one week of receipt, three of the five presidential candidates responded that they would like to discuss the agenda's recommendations. For the remaining two candidates, the answer was yes when is coming.

However, realizing that what was at stake was the future of agricultural development over the next six years, the Alyansa leaders refused to give up. They persisted in securing the two candidates' responses to the proposed agenda.

In doing so, they found out that the obstacles were not the candidates themselves, but bureaucratic procedures and cookies cutters. Pitch determined perseverance, the Alyansa eventually got the responses of the two candidates, and were gratified with the results.

All the candidates approved in principle the Alyansa's proposed agenda with its special attention to the countryside farmers and fisherfolk.

Of the agenda's 21 priority items, there was unanimous agreement on four. President Macapagal-Arroyo, Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Sen. Raul Roco, Fernando Poe Jr. and Bro. Eddie Villanueva supported the following: 1) investment in economic tariffs for agriculture products in countries that have not appropriately decreased the subsidies for those products, 2) to maintain quantitative restrictions on the importation beyond 2005 until adequate support to farmers so as

Continued on B5

Taipannic dogfight

THE BATTLE for the dominance of the local skies between Taipans Lucio Tan and John Gokongwei Jr. is getting to be crazy.

According to the pro-Gokongwei grapevine, Cebu Pacific has now slashed about 40 percent of the domestic passenger tariffs from the previous monopoly fields of Philippine Airlines.

And, in its secondary hub of Cebu City, the Gokongwei airline now fields more flights than PAL and its sister airline, Air Philippines, combined.

After its lease expires, Cebu Pacific is now seriously considering between the Brazilian-made 728-seater Embraer 170 and the 106-seater Boeing 717 to replace its all-OC 9 fleet for both local and regional destinations.

The Gokongwei airline is, incidentally, scheduled to offer starting May 10 charter flights to Xiamen, in addition to Guangzhou.

The airline also maintains scheduled flights to Hong Kong and Seoul with bottom-seeking fares and has been eying to obtain flights as coveted Tokyo spiral zoning and continued incursion from PAL.

As to the choice of new planes, both Embraer 170 and Boeing 717 offer more fuel efficiency and less noise and emission than the four-decades-old DC-9s. According to the grapevine, the Gokongwei team favors and tested both jets in special demo flights in Manila.

As well, both fuselage and flooring models have cabin space and wider seats than the economy class seating mode in Cebu Pacific's DC9s that airlines deep into Grandstock.

With the refleeting, Cebu Pacific should also be able to claim the title of having the youngest planes in the region.

Mr. John's real title

AND speaking of John Gokongwei Jr., the tycoon may officially be retired now from the JG Summit Group but the patriarch still very much looms over the shoulders of everyone else within the family empire.

An indication of his hands-on presence was then even the proposed cover for the JG Summit annual report had to be approved by Mr. John at the conference of Universal Robina stockholders' meeting Tuesday, in full view of shareholders and journalists.

This prompted Universal Robina chairman Robert Coyiuto Jr. to joke that Mr. John's title really is Executive Chairman and Mr. Albert's boardroom thingie should read, Office of the Assisted Chairman.

In short, Ouch.

Baka u-turn

HOWEVER CHANGING the US federal approval, Saipan Gov. Juan Babauta **has put up another stumbling block** to the purchase by the Delgados of the island's telephone company.

Babauta, who himself is fighting for his political future, now wants the Delgados to post a $10-million performance bond prior to giving the green light to their acquisition of the telecommunications company. Offshore-mainland phone giant Verizon.

To each investor points from the cautionary Micronesian Telecom, which also operates a cellular phone network, shrubbed long-distance rates between Saipan and neighboring commonwealth islands of Rota and Tinian, prepare ways for the Delgado acquisition.

But the goodwill gesture is apparently not enough for Babauta, who, if he were to believe the grapevine, would rather have a local group of friends/businessmen acquire the phone company instead.

Heard through the grapevine

PRAYER for the week: May Panglaon win and FPJ lose but better still if they're the ones slugging it out in the ring. Amen. (Email: outtales_pdi@yahoo.com or outtales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

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RP debt hit P4.13T in Feb.

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE NATIONAL government's outstanding debt grew to P4.13 trillion in February, from P4.12 trillion the previous month, as the government continued to engage in borrowings to help meet its budget requirement for the year.

According to data from the Department of Finance, the total debt figure included the P3.407 trillion in actual liabilities of the national government and the P722 billion in contingent liabilities.

Contingent liabilities are loans accrued by government-owned or -controlled corporations and government financial institutions that are guaranteed by the national government. The GOCCs and GFIs included the Philippine National Bank, the Development Bank of the Philippines and the National Power Corp.

The DOF data also showed that the increase in the government's debt was brought about by an increase in both domestic and foreign borrowings. The total February debt figure was composed of P1.79 trillion worth of domestic borrowings and P2.34 trillion worth of foreign borrowings.

The government is targeting to limit its domestic borrowings for the whole year to P1.918 trillion, and its external borrowings to $1.595 billion.

For the whole year, the government is hoping that the country's debt-story would be contained below the ceiling of P4.52 billion.

The increase in the debt stock was also partly attributed to the slight fall of the peso against the dollar from January to February. The exchange rate used in determining the total amount of foreign borrowings in February was P56.23-to-$1, compared with the P56-to-$1 used in January.

The national government's debt level indicates the total amount of liabilities it incurred over the years. The liabilities include the borrowings the government had to make to bridge the gap between revenues collection and expenditures.

Peso hits 4-mo high

Turn to page B2

A trader from a local bank said the BSP's aggressive buying of dollars tempered the peso's appreciation.

The peso rallied for three consecutive days as surveys showed President Macapagal-Arroyo gaining lead over her rivals.

"The foreign exchange market was marked by some short-covering before the weekend and a strong demand from cultures and manufacturing companies," said BSP Deputy Governor Armando Ibarrola Jr.

Another source from the Monetary Board said the BSP had been a net buyer of dollars since April 1.

The BSP's dollar purchases, along with the foreign exchange remittances from overseas Filipino workers and public sector borrowings, are seen to boost the country's international reserves and the country's balance of payments position, for the month of April. Doris C. Dumlao

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San Miguel to set up beverage facility in Vietnam

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL Corp. on Wednesday signed an agreement with property firm Artexco (Vietnam) Co. Ltd. to allow the food and beverage giant to put up a beverage facility in Vietnam.

The agreement is in line with SMC's bid to expand in the Asia-Pacific region.

The 40-year property lease agreement signed with Artexco involves a 150,000-square-meter property at Binh Hoa (2) in Dong Nai province, Vietnam.

The lease agreement will be effective until December 2043.

SMC earlier teamed up with Artexco for a similar venture in Rayong, Thailand.

The beverage facility to be built will manufacture high quality beverages, primarily from domestic materials. Some products include fruit-based drinks, bottled water and other beverages.

A business license from the Dong Nai Industrial Zones Authority was issued last October.

SMC's investment in Vietnam will allow the company to rank in six Vietnam's expected economic growth.

In 1996, SMC set up San Miguel Brewery Vietnam Ltd. in Hiba Thang Thai some year. San Miguel (Ho Chi Minh) Co. started making metal closures and caps, while San Miguel Yamamura Saigkong (San Co., began producing and marketing glass containers.

It also recently completed its purchase of FTC Vietnam Ltd., a company with key lines and steel milling operations in Binh Duong.

SMC aims to be among Asia's top consumer food and beverage firms by 2007, according to Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., SMC chairman and chief operating officer.

Cojuangco said it has subsidiaries a number of ground breaking activities in various countries in Asia Pacific by the second half next year which would firm up its foothold in those locations.

SMC has already identified seven countries as part of its regional expansion in Asia-Pacific, initially earmarking $100 million for each expansion. These are Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan and Australia.

SMC recently signed an agreement to acquire assets of Thai beer maker Thai Asahi Brewery Ltd. for $140 million, which includes a brewery on a 21.7% hectare site at the Pathum Thani province in Central Thailand, some 36 kilometers north of Bangkok.

Last November, SMC also purchased a leading food producer in Vietnam.

It also entered a business license for its non-alcoholic business in Shunde, Guangdong Province in mainland China.

The company's total investment there will amount to $40 million while the franchise will allow the company to operate in Shunde for 50 years, or until March 2054.

SHARING OF BLESSINGS

The Corazon "Cory" Madrigal Foundation has set aside P28.8 million for a project to help the poor in the Bicol Region. From left (seated), Susana Kit Madrigal, Manuel Cabarrus, Consuelo "Chito" Madrigal, Gemma Malaya, Margie Floirendo, Yoyi Madrigal, (standing, from left) Rene Valencia, William Concepcion, Fernando Zobel de Ayala and Alberto Jugo marked the launching on May 5 with a simple ceremony held at the Madrigal residence in Makati City.

Napocor fails to secure MB loan approval

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE PLAN of the National Power Corp. to borrow $300 million may no longer push through after the agency failed to secure the Monetary Board's approval as scheduled last week.

The proceeds of the planned borrowing was supposed to help meet the power firm's financing requirement for the year, which amounts to a total of $1.1 billion.

The borrowing was being arranged by Citi Vienbang and was supposed to be done through a private placement, according to a source.

The source said the arrangement with Citi was supposed to be completed before the elections. But since the Monetary Board did not give its approval as scheduled, Napocor and the national government would have to consider other private placements offers.

An official from the Department of Finance said government and Napocor officials are working out the planned borrowing for the power utility, and they are hoping to raise a substantial amount soon after the elections.

The government has already helped the cash-strapped power firm to raise a third of its $1.3-billion borrowing requirement for 2004 through the issuance of bonds.

Last month, the government sold $300 million worth of 7- and 10-year global bonds.

The amount raised from the global bond issue added to the $1 million the government raised on Napocor's behalf.

The government usually borrow on behalf of Napocor—this time, with the aim of zero-coupon bonds—which has the biggest liability among government-owned and -controlled corporations.

The credit-risky Napocor expects to post a net loss of P13 billion this year.

Communication ...

From page B1

place; 3) to threaten land reform with the necessary support services, and address tenants property rights protection so that the farmer is better rather than worse off; and, 4) to prosecute and jail smugglers, as well as stop the importation of products that pose bio-security risks.

Things to come

On the recommendation of allocating the coco levy funds for the benefit of small coconut farmers, all candidates except one said they would follow the Supreme Court decision supporting this position, but would likewise respect the judicial process of settling first the motion for reconsideration raised on this issue. Roy's position was that this needed further study.

The agenda item which generated the most controversy was the proposed bill convergence of DAR 17. This pertains to the codes delineating municipal waters 15 km from the shoreline to protect the small fishermen from commercial fishing. All candidates favored the preservation of these waters.

However, President Macapagal, Lacson and Poe expressed reservations on the boundaries delineation of the waters. This is because it might mean the 'bounding of coconut-rich fishing in the municipal waters of the many islands where hardly any small fisherfolk are allowed.

The Alyansa leaders are pleased that all the presidential candidates agreed in principle with their proposed agenda.

Instead of the farmers and fisherfolk responding to the politicians' programs, the Alyansa leaders succeeded in persuading politicians to consider the agricultural agenda they had formulated for over a year. If this is the crucial seven as a preview of things to come, then the new paradigm of empowered farmers and fisherfolk, would be the biggest outcome of all.

The author is chair of Agrinetwork, a private sector initiative; former undersecretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrinetwork@yahoo.com or telefax (02) 851-5605.)

LIFESTYLE

HOW much is that bridal gown in the window? Pineapple-woven chandy Ortiz wedding ensemble. White orbs and chairs and panels of the wall within the store.

A good Magazine you can't put down

Text and photos by Chelo Barot-Fortunato

IN WHAT was originally known as the French Concession in Shanghai, a district with tree-lined streets and 1930s architecture, Shanghai literally springs a surprise on you: a lifestyle store named Magazine that sells Philippine-made furniture, home accessories, art, clothes, bags, jewelry and other desirable things.

The display window wraps you in cozy tones. The mannequin is wearing a trend-fab wedding gown designed by Randy Ortiz, already with Old World romance in mind. Other bridal gowns and casual clothes designed by Patricia Ramos-Diaz, Jojie Llorens, Dennis Lustico, Albert Fala and Ortiz are in the front rooms. You'll also find bags by Mel Antiporda, the store manager so keen and so local she sits on the floor.

Magazine is a revelation. Tables made of banana walis, sugar cane and narrow strips, bamboo screens, Marian resin ceramic jars, candle holders of all sizes and styles—all the greatest stuff that you've never seen in Souvenir Row Philippines. Where have all these treasures been hiding?

Retail king Jun Chua collaborated with Miguel Rivera and his nephew Carlos Chua on the concept of Magazine. It's literally

to section H2

RACKS OF CLOTHES (subjects to Patrick Ramon Diaz, Randy Ortiz, Jojo Llorca, Dennis Lustica and Rhett Eala, all Pinoy)

JEWELRY from Avenue

ASSORTED ceramics and tableware from Chinese artisans

A good Magazine you can't put down

This lifestyle store opens up to a Shanghai surprise of Pinoy design verve and creativity, an island of flair in a hustling continent

From page C1

based Joyce Markering is responsible for sourcing and the Shanghai-based Gwyneth Markering takes care of the retail side and is frontlined by Carleen.

The Chans (and Joyce) recalling the idea of starting the Shanghai monitor for years. They couldn't decide between selling pieces à la bench or dealing in home furnishings à la Armstrong. Why not both? Thus was born Magazine. It is actually a spin-off of last year's highly successful Philippine exhibition in Shanghai. After the fair, said Carleen, they asked themselves: What happens next?

Despite its explosion on the growth of retail by the country's exhibitors, they agreed to get into a retail business that would sell things Philippine.

"Since real estate was booming and people were building, renovating and refurnishing houses, we thought of opening a home store," says Carleen. "The Thais and the Vietnamese were already in the market with their furniture and home accessories. Filipino na lang ang natitira."

At first they were apprehensive about filling up 400 sq m of space. They also had a hard time convincing the Cebu furniture makers to export to China. "They were apprehensive about selling to the Chinese," says Ben. "They were afraid of copycats." But the Cebuanos returned and once the furniture arrived from Cebu, the Chans realized what a blessing it was that they had all that space to indulge in Filipino creativity.

"The furniture lines from our best sellers," says Carleen. "We've had no problems with our stocks because the Cebu exporters are so professional and experienced."

The Chans wanted to be picky. Magazine was going to sell 100 percent Philippine-born. But the reality of retailing has made them see the wisdom in buying ceramics and chairs were right in China, where they were cheaper, better and less likely to break in transit. Other than the ceramics, everything is still sourced in the Philippines.

It seems natural for an import store like Magazine to segue into supplying other furniture stores in Shanghai and beyond. "Right now, our plans are to go into wholesale and to deepen our product line instead of widening the range," says Carleen.

It is obvious that both smile and seem proud of the goods they carry in Magazine. Ben is no stranger to Cebu furniture: he has an armchair by Kenneth Cobonpue in his own home. As for Carleen, she loves the bamboo which Cobonpue has modernized, along with an ergonomically designed backrest.

Magazine, in fact, is such a showcase for Filipino ingenuity and craftsmanship it is the wider version of Philippine creative offices in Shanghai. The shop has a cafe furnished with white sofas and chairs. While furniture is always being sold, the cafe is a place where it's contingent for a shop in Shanghai or a cinema in France.

One of the most heartening comments about the shop exacts: "I've been in the Philippines for many years and this is the best collection I've seen in one place."

That just about covers it for Magazine.

Magazine is at 418 Wulong Road, Xuhui District, Shanghai. tel. +8621-6431-9977.

WOGGEN Armchairs in single and double versions, solid wood stool by Design Alchemy, Linea dining table and armchair by Kenneth Cobonpue, Spanish tiles by Hakimtiles, J.Lo sculpture/vase in Bangkok by Design Alchemy; hanging capiz lamp by TH Philippines

HIGH AND LOW! Painting by Jojo Lafrancis, low table with Mactan stone by Classical Geometry, wooden carved vase by Design Alchemy, lamp and bookends by local Chinese artists

CZECH cabin-inspired rattan loveseat, lounge chair and table from Casa Cebu, sugar cane tray by Jamaica, rattan side table from Cuenca, multi-purpose box from Sarviento/Banana armchair by Kenneth Cobonpue, weaving tables from TH Phils., Gabby Barredo side chair and floor lamp with ostrich egg from Flerca

SAGE Linen Mactanique in black, ashcan, walnut, bamboo mobilité in the spring and summer collection winter leather dominance), Shanghai souvenir shirts by Bench, Kawayan dining table and Lolita side chair by Kenneth Cobonpue, Jicapi Wong cabinets and quadro console table by Cobonpue; table lamp with ostrich egg from Flerca

CARLSON Chan and uncle Ben

VIGNETTES Mirrors from Switzerland, fiberglass vases from Design Alchemy, side tables with Iranian style lamination by Carlos

BETTY BOOP! The look was the rage in the 1920s. To achieve it, Arenas uses pale foundation, smudged eyeliner, and matte red lipstick to shape the lips like a heart. The eyebrows are tweaked. False eyelashes are "brushed" using eyelash glue and liquid eyeliner.

LIFESTYLE

From beauty queen to makeup maven

ABBYGALE Arenas, stylist Miles Arcega and hairdressers Laurel Reyes and Tintin Lopez doll up model Phoemela Baranda.

Text by Alex T. Vergara
Photos by Poncho Ocampo

ABBYGALE Arenas seems to know makeup in the same way a seasoned cardiologist knows every muscle and artery of the heart.

She describes the intricacies of makeup with textbook precision. A smooth blusher, soft, dark and sculpted, but a lackluster makeup artist she's certainly not. Just check out the five different looks she came up with for Lifestyle on these pages.

Making others beautiful

After years of being doffed up by some of the country's leading stylists and makeup artists, the former model and beauty queen has turned to pampering and beautifying others.

To prepare for her new role, the one-time Avon image consultant recently took up a month-long course at the prestigious Studio Makeup Academy in Hollywood.

Apart from giving the finer points of applying "beauty makeup" (as opposed to prosthetics) that spans several decades and looks, the course introduced Arenas to such oft-overlooked basics as lighting and proper use of tools and accessories other than brushes, tweezers and sponges.

Choosing the right makeup bags and investing on a portable dresser with lit mirrors are only make the job easier, she says, but also impress clients. They also keep fragile and expensive makeup, like eye shadows and cake foundations, from breaking.

Lighting and hygiene

"I thought I already had substantial background on lighting from being around Jun," says Arenas, referring to husband and star photographer Jun de Leon. But despite "the headache I got from absorbing all those technical terms," the stylist she learned a lot from the day-long lighting seminar.

Even proper hygiene was taught in Hollywood, Arenas says. Sharing makeup brushes doesn't end with a dirt-free brush and spotless sponge. How a makeup artist personally keeps herself has a direct effect on her work. Rubbing alcohol and breath freshener have thus become essential tools of Arenas' trade.

"I'd spend an average of $10 a day to stock up on tissue paper,

PHOTOGRAPHY P4

JENNY FROM THE BLOCK. The face of the new millennium is inspired by elements from past decades. For the J.Lo look, Arenas uses bronzy foundation, prominent eyeliner, crisscross false eyelashes and glossy nude lipstick.

SHE BOPS. Cyndi Lauper comes alive in a multicolored wig, eight shades of eye shadow, fishnet-on and glittery lipstick. Like the decade's fashion, makeup in the 1980s was over-the-top.

VINTAGE COOL. Arenas uses several shades of browns and highlights to achieve a black-and-white image inspired by Marlene Dietrich. She avoids reddish makeup, she says, as it tends to look grayish in black-and-white photos.

From beauty queen to makeup maven

The former canvas of cosmetic artists, Abbygale Arenas takes on the job herself and finds a new career making faces

From page E3

rubbing alcohol and disposable stuff such as powder puffs and sponges," she says. "Their [American] bio. 1 concern is hygiene. Everything should be sterilized or at least spotlessly clean. Even the tweezers wands are supposed to be disposable. It's a no-no to come to their sensibility besides."

And since the world of fashion and showbiz has more than its fair share of big egos, Arenas was also taught how to deal with people and make them not only look good but feel good as well.

Maintaining a low profile by dressing down may be difficult for a former top model and Ms. Philippines-Universe, but Arenas is trying her best.

"We were told to look as inconspicuous as possible so as not to make the subject feel threatened," she says with a wink. "At first I thought it would be hard, but it was simply a matter of getting used to. After all, we're here to make other people shine."

A typical day in the academy included a series of lectures. Aside from discussing technical skills that went into each look, instructor Darren Myers, a veteran makeup artist, also imbibed the trainee behind each friend.

There were no practical exams or grades to bumble, but Myers encouraged each of her students' work, which she then later dissected in class.

"We learned from each other's mistakes as Darren pointed out the pluses and minuses of our respective works," says Arenas.

Of course, Arenas is no greenhorn when it comes to makeup, but she felt she had to start afresh to become a more effective cosmetic artist.

"If there's one thing I learned, makeup isn't easy," she says. "Makeup can be very complicated, but it can be fun. The experience opened my eyes to countless possibilities. I fear tend to smooth to a smooth."

Crash course

Her initiation to makeup came at the tender age of 17 (quite late, actually considering how even most of today's teenagers are) when seasoned makeup artist Jinky Jimeno gave her a crash course on basic makeup and grooming the day before she left for the Supermodel of the World contest abroad.

"Today did the right side of my face, and I tried to duplicate it by doing the left side," she recalls. "He even got the exact items we used from his makeup bag and put them into mine. I was touched. I'll be forever grateful to Jinky."

That was in 1992. As she toured various parts of Asia as one of the country's top representatives, Arenas became more experienced at putting on facial color. Makeup artists, she says, were considered luxuries during such trips.

But her scrimpy of what was supposed to be beautiful suddenly took a 360-degree turn when she joined and won Ms. Pilipinas in 1997.

Fine-line eyebrows, which were quite "in" during that time, had to give way to a louder pair. Arenas checked her favorite matte burgundy lipstick in favor of a glossy pink one. She also learned the art of illusion by trying on various hairpieces.

"I learned to do my face in a totally different way," she says, "and this helped me a lot during the Miss Universe contest. I never let trainers coach my face since I came to every event with my makeup on."

Upon returning home from the pageant where she landed a spot the of the top 10 finalists, she packed her newfound know-how into a new career as event's image model.

Part of the job included conducting seminars on personality development. It was only a matter of time before she ventured into something grooming and corporate makeup seminars.

SEVEN YEAR ITCH. "Marilyn Monroe," in Eric Pinder's electrifying white halter dress, has blond, dreamy eyes, full red lips and a natural-looking false mole.

Abbygale Arenas is a freelance makeup artist and beauty consultant for Emphasis Salon (Rockwell). Call her at 8908832/33.

E-mail the author at cowgirl@inquirer.com.ph

Shopping high in Thailand

BE MARCH. Bangkok was inundated as Fashion City (a ten high-end shopping centers like this one) a peak malls and designer shops.

THESE expert-quality bags are products of a government-funded livelihood program called One Tambon One Product.

Amazement and incredulity are words to describe Bangkok's shopping haunts

Text and photos by Cherie V. Pineda

"YOU have no time to shop!"

That was our Thai guide Joseph on the inquisitive. Again.

We knew the man was merely doing his job, but we had just about had it with him. "Okay, I give you five minutes... Done, only 45 minutes..." Oh, now he was just being mean!

Muddled curses and murderous glances were being thrown his way. When our cajoling, begging and pleading didn't work, we just ignored him and went on to grab every funky ring, watch, earrings and bracelets as quickly and as many as we could and our poor escorts led us away.

Before you start judging us, let me explain the situation.

It was our fourth day in Bangkok, and we, a group of journalists from Manila, Singapore and Indonesia, were being toured around the city's Chinatown on foot, as part of the tour sponsored by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) to promote the Amazing Thailand Grand Sale on June 1 to July 31.

Bangkok's Chinatown may be one of the last few uncharted shopping areas in the city that even frequent travelers slash shoppers to Thailand perhaps don't know about. Best, I say, because their sell shoes, bags and fashion accessories at wholesale prices (it's the source, so items are sold at wholesale quantities, too); but uncharted because, tell your friends who frequent Bangkok where best to look for cheap fashion finds and chances are they'll say MBK, Chatuchak, Santa Lazo Night Market, Siam Square and a whole lot of shopping malls, but never Chinatown.

Now never mind the Indonesian and Singaporeans, who didn't seem to feel as passionately about the shopping part of the tour as our bunch of eight Pinays did. We were there to do a crazy on shopping, and we would

BOOMERANG C2

FUNKY plastic bangles from Bangkok Chinatown. A dozen each of these can be sold in two places in Manila.

A PILE of sneaker rings in Chinatown, where a dozen pairs of cool shoes costs about 700 baht.

BOARDED and floral-designer bags at Central department store

CANDYHUED rhinestone rings (above) and '60s-style earrings (below) from Chinatown

Shopping high in Thailand

THE DINNING Discovery mall right across MBK, with a big Sbx Llamiere shop, and top-notch users Loft, among others

CHINATOWN is home to one of the source of the so-called "Bangkok gold" (right). Metal earrings from Soan Lom (above)

GOLD-PLATED earrings from Soan Lom Night Market

COOL plastic watches from MBK

CUTE brooches bought with "baht-change" from Chinatown

IT'S AS CLOSE TO THE GROVE AS YOU CAN GET

AVAILABLE AT THE CHILLED SECTION OF LEADING SUPERMARKETS

FROM TOP: A colorful Missoni shirt from MBK; a cool boho top for the cocktail; from Chatuchak; and mini-skirt for my sister, from Chatuchak

BURBERRY for

CHRIS 1947 by Christian Dior

HALLOWEEN

Best scents for best moms

MAKEOVER 911

Elvroy Leitao

May is Mother's Month! After everything our moms have done for us, they deserve well-thought-of presents. We have the habit of last-minute gift shopping so we end up settling for something generic. She deserves much more.

My personal policy is never mind how late I give the gift as long as it is something she really wants or needs.

I went for mama's friends. The fragrance for spring/summer collection 2004 (from March to August) calls for something lighter than the all-out glamour of holiday fragrances. Let's see what's shipped in for

Stella sweet. Picking a scent along this line could be a challenge as vanilla is too strong to get away with this summer. Or vanilla light with Clinique's Simply, which has our bills and wanted you words, and smells all creamy like a newly nursed baby; and Burberry Brit, which smells like sugary almonds with vanilla.

Try also D'Orsharo Eau de Hibi (honey with floral notes), an alcohol-free scent that was originally designed to counteract the smell kids get after having stinky Cha-cha tan-ning. It is perfect for our weather.

The Spanish scents. I love discovering always scents because one of my pet peeves is generic smell. The Spanish scents have specialized in retailing clean and fresh no matter the undercoats. What I have shown them is clean you-say opus from afar throughout the day in a refresher without gagging the people beside you. **Angel Schlesser Femme** smells like assorted oranges as it contains mandarin (sweet orange), bergamot (bitter orange) and neroli (orange blossoms). Or Ella by Adolfo Pazos is a mix of rose, nectar and mandarin that **a reminiscent of someone who just** stepped out of the shower. Bathroom is perfect for casual days...think of those light Japanese scents that smell like summers, gardenias, lime blossoms and lavender.

Finally-scents. As refreshing and yummy that they will appeal to moms. Scents lobed with vanilla like berry jams with touches of guava and mango. Paul Smith Extreme for women has Italian Woodrich and black currant essence.

Citrus. This is a classic summer scent as it doesn't overpower the sense of smell and refreshing as the same time. I would recommend Versace's Eladrian, which is a citrus-scented that will subtly freshen. I so smelled lemon, orange and grapefruit that I had to exercise myself from chomping the bottle.

Floral. Same notes, same sophistication and more suits for anything else. I guess my mom Michael Kors and she is crazy about it. The combination of cashmere [Jasmo de rouche], spices and sandalwood is not for the faint of heart. I am thinking of buying the big chime and Glimmer Body Crème for myself. Chris 1947 by Christian Dior is a limited edition sweet floral which appeals to women from 30 to 60. It wears great for days with the fruity floral blend which is great for summer.

Anti-aging serum

Just because it's summer and our skin is oily does not mean we have stopped aging. We are in pursuit of an anti-aging formula that won't make the most mature [30 and up] oily-skinned people break out.

At Healthy Options in Greenbelt 3, where they sell vitamins and health supplements, I found Skin Care Factors Day Firming treatment with Alpha Lipoic Acid and Omax extract

NEXT TO

NOUVELLE JAPAN

Sake San

JAPANESE RESTAURANT & SAKE BAR

VERY NEW. VERY CLASSIC. VERY JAPANESE.

Alexis says Angelika Dela Cruz, Alberto Aguado and Zoraida Cichon as well as personalities from the government, business sector and media guests the Aldo San Antonio, Alex Lichauco Pangilinan and Pia Cayetano Magalona-Wurtzbach and Rhoda Villaraza-Cruz

Sake San appeals to both die-hard Japanese food lovers and young people just out for a good time with its intimate and non-intimidating interiors done in elegantic red and black. Original art inspired by Kabuki and J-pop hangs on the store's walls, giving it a quirky, fresh ambiance that sets it apart from other Asian themed restaurants. True to its name, this is one place where sake and the food fully satisfy. Very new, very classic, very Japanese, that's the Sake San flavor.

A new star rises at SM MEGAMALL 4TH LEVEL with the opening of Sake San, where Japanese cuisine puts on a new face. Sake San is the brainchild of Venny Villaroncio, scion of the Villaroncio clan of restaurateurs. The Villaroncios were responsible for transforming the Japanese restaurant scene in Manila through the Sizuki chain. With its well-lit dining area and see through kitchens, Filipinos were introduced to a clean, comfortable venue for affordable and authentic Japanese food. The Sizuki Japanese Buffet still stands as a breakthrough in the widespread acceptance of one of Asia's most popular cuisines here in the Philippines. Now it's the younger Villaroncios' turn to make their mark in the family business. While most Japanese restaurants in the metro are staffed by local chefs, the Sake San kitchen is under the direct supervision of Isao Takada, veteran master chef from Japan. Chef Takada has set out to improve a new generation of salted dishes with his cutting edge Japanese nouvelle cuisine, while less adventurous palates may take comfort in Sake San's extensive menu of popular all-time Japanese favorites.

While studying business in La Salle, Venny often thought of putting his own restaurant. He envisioned the place as an alternative hangout where young urban professionals or burgeoning families can enjoy exciting and contemporary Japanese food without the prohibitive prices of upscale restaurants, but still above the quality found in fast-food outlets. With the support of wife Teresa, sisters Pia, Cara, Hana, Vicky and brother Bobie, Venny's vision was assured of a perfect realization. A successful restaurant is not just a family but a team effort as well, and Sake San's starting line-up included the best in the business, from the expert kitchen crew and the impeccably trained 'waitstaff' to the brilliant marketing team. At the formal opening, the Villaroncio family forces were in full display, from the eldest daughter Pia Villaroncio Lago, along with her husband , former PBA cager Dwight and daughter Kiana, the twins Mara and Cara, Bobie and Vicky. Stealing the show was Marjay's son, Venny, who claimed his spot with the guests of honor during the ribbon cutting and blessing officiated by Fr. Gervasio G. Pita, a family friend. The opening celebration, being a major social event in the middle of the Lenten Season, turned out to be a temptation too good to abstain from. A grand time was had by all and the newest go-to-spot in the metropolis earned its place in the maps of gastronomes and gourmands everywhere.

For reservations call 6363785/6342481

Sake San Sushi Special P900.00

Sake San Sashimi Special P1,200.00

Master Chef Isao Takada

Helga Mendel, Venny Cara and Pia Villaroncio-Lago

Message in a bottle

Scents can convey love for Mom

GUCCI Eau de Parfum Fragrance precious raw materials into a single script. A model mix of fresh gardenia, tuberose and cedar wood conveys a confidence, love and refinement. A balance of violet and tuberose brings sensuality to the composition. Rounding it, bitter orange and blackcurrant deliver cultured calmness and sparkle.

Gucci Eau de Parfum II is available on all leading department/ duty-free/ specialty/boutiques and exclusively from Rustan Marketing Corp.

ISSEY MIYAKE is a floral fragrance made vivid with top notes of clementine, black currant, green cassis and wild pear-peonies. Heart notes of freesia, lily of the valley, geranium and green tea as well as base notes of cedar wood, vetiver, patchouli and musk complete the feel of an English garden with a twist.

CHANEL adds a dream with Coco Mademoiselle by Alber Elbaz. Notes of tangerine and orange flower water whisk you away with sparkling hesperidia while amber crystals, musk and vetiver leave dreams in its wake.

CAROLINA HERRERA introduced Carolina Herrera de Toilette. Made for the modern woman, it's a balanced mixture of nature's scents. Freshly picked from wood, amber, musk, flowery petals, fruits, bitter orange and pepper, this fragrance leaves a feeling of anticipation, surprise, passion and emotion.

Best scents. . .

From page H1

at P5,000 per 3 oz. that lasts for a good four to five months. Use it on face and back.

Alpha Lipoic is the ultimate antioxidant that is both water- and oil-soluble. It increases the glutathione levels in our body which removes toxins and gives a lighter skin side effect. It also contains AHA for exfoliation, grapeseed oil another antioxidant for skin hydration and Coenzyme Q10 for firming. It works best when used during daytime under makeup or as day moisturizer.

The results on my skin: fewer lines, smaller pores, no more fine lines and rosy cheeks without obvious peeling. Warning: Dryer skin folks may need extra

CLINIQUE Simply

moisturizer set, 950.

E-mail bimyauis@yahoo.com. Smart subscribers may send all inputs on my latest must-haves/ adventures/ experiences/ wish-lists/ and/or rules-to-live-by to 0917 504 0836 for SMS, send KIMMY ON to 234. For MMS, send MMS KIMMYON to 234.